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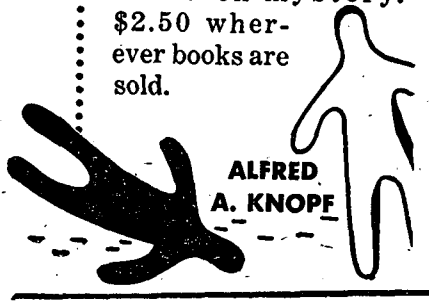

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FIFTH ANNUAL REPORT ON EQMM's PRIZE CONTESTS

by ELLERY QUEEN

THE Fifth Annual Detective Short Story Contest, sponsored by *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, in cooperation with Little, Brown & Company of Boston, proved to be, from every standpoint, the most successful literary competition in *EQMM* history. The outstanding result can be summed up in one short, simple statement: *the average level of quality was the highest yet achieved by contributors to EQMM*. This was equally true of all the submissions in general, and of the prize-winning stories in particular. If there is one 'tec tremor, one Queenish qualm, in your Editors' hearts, it is the exhilarating wonder: How in the name of deus detectivus will the short-story writers in the mystery field ever top their brilliant performance of last year? But that is this year's worry, and next year's, and the years after that — *ad* (we hope) *infinitum* . . .

Now it is our privilege and profound pleasure to give you the details of *EQMM's* Fifth Annual Contest. Here are the rich, rewarding results.

1. QUANTITY

Last year's contest produced the largest number of submissions ever to reach our editorial Eden in a single year's competition. The entries totaled 915 manuscripts — truly, a 'tec tidal wave.

2. ORIGIN

The 915 manuscripts came by land, sea, and air from the four corners of the world — from the United States, Alaska, Canada, Mexico, Jamaica and St. Vincent in the British West Indies, and Canal Zone in North America; from Brazil and Argentina in South America; from China, Japan, Hawaii, and the Philippines in Asia; from Australia; from Morocco, Egypt, Transvaal, and Cape Province in Africa; from England, Ireland, Scotland, France, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Hungary, and Russia in Europe; — from the United Nations of Detectivedom.

3. FINALISTS

Although we had guaranteed only 11 awards, for the fifth successive year the contributors compelled us, by the sheer quality of their submissions, to increase the number of prizes. In the Fifth Annual 'Tec Tournament we awarded more prizes than ever before — no less than 33.

4. SCENES

The 33 prize-winning stories will take you on a veritable Crook's

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Tour of larcenous locales and bloodhound backgrounds — to old New York, in the middle of the Nineteenth Century; to new New York, in the middle of the Twentieth Century, including arrival on the crack train Super-Century, and a sightseeing trip through Police Headquarters, apartment hotels, a television studio, an ancient mansion near Central Park, Macy's department store, Museum of Natural History, and George Washington Bridge; to the wilds of South Carolina; to a Civic Auditorium and Municipal Courthouse in Wicheka, U. S.; to Chicago's famous Pump Room; to an Antique and Curio Shop, somewhere in the United States; to a "nice house" in London; to Godolphin Villa in Palermo, Italy; to the state penitentiary in California; to the City Morgue in San Francisco; to a Loan Company office in Tiamara, Florida; to a cafe in Skid Row, Los Angeles; to a beauty parlor in Hollywood; to a department of Scotland Yard and an unpretentious inn on the Thames; to a phrenologist's establishment and a barber's shop on a middle-class street in London; to the Soames Museum in High Holborn and to Dartmoor prison; to a virgin forest and valley in the Cape Province of South Africa; to a night club in Connecticut and a gambling joint in Massachusetts; to a legend-haunted cave in Scotland; to the scorching desert of the Southwest; to the feuding hill-country of Kentucky; to a small town near Kansas City, then south through Oklahoma, Texas, and New Mexico, heading over the border to *mañana* . . .

5. CHARACTERS

The 33 prize-winning stories introduce you to a cast of criminologists and criminals, manhunters and murderers, and assorted saintly and sinful suspects. You will meet, and in some instances never forget, a harridan, a jezebel, and the nephew of the Marquis de Lafayette; an illiterate backwoods woman and a city slicker; a clergyman-detective and a blasphemous, atheistic lecturer; a curious dealer in curios and a blowsy, unconventional spinster; a "bomb happy" war hero and a country-fresh farmer's daughter; a dilettante and a Sicilian guttersnipe with the face of an angel; a kindly old candy-store owner and a man with the body of a God and the brain of an idiot; tough gangsters, Federal investigators, and a 14-year-old "genius"; the Chief of the Division of Interplanetary Defense; a banker and a janitor; a radio script writer and an actress; a staid British solicitor and a hard, fast, sophisticated young woman who has "knocked about since she was twenty-two"; a phrenologist and a cigarette girl; a shyster criminal lawyer and a society chatelaine; a psychologist, a naturalist, a photographer, and a prehistoric monster; an Arabian aristocrat and an Arabian beauty; a fat one and a thin one; a waitress and a college boy; rustlers and hustlers; daffies and dillies; professors and prosecutors; expatriates and explor-

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ers; mobsters and madcaps; technicians and theologists; singers and scientists — and people who might be living next door to you this very moment . . .

6. CRIMES

The 33 prize-winning stories constitute a "compleat" calendar of crime. You will participate — vicariously, of course — in murder, adultery, impersonation, embezzlement, "accident," blackmail, frame-up, juvenile delinquency, coercion, bank robbery, gambling, political graft and corruption, theft, forgery, hoax, counterfeiting, kidnaping, arson, vandalism, cruelty to animals, moonshining, mountain feuding — and love.

7. MOTIVES

The 33 prize-winning stories probe, dissect, and expose the motivating forces at the root of evil — gain, greed, ambition, jealousy, insanity, revenge, self-preservation, hate, hunger, survival, and the compulsion to find a dream-world in Mexico, France, Hollywood, London, Sicily, Arabia — anywhere and everywhere on these homicidal hemispheres.

8. METHODS

The 33 prize-winning stories muster the means of murder and the methods of malice — repeating rifle, dagger, faked accident, revolver, stiletto, log-pick, strangulation, Bowie knife, hypodermic syringe, Police positive, tommygun, poison, spinal analgesia, drowning, fright, sundial gun, jamb gun, gunlock, hanging, blunt instrument, and at least one *modus operandi* too horrible to put into words.

9. CLUES

The 33 prize-winning stories present a procession of clues at once provocative, prodigious, and profuse. You will puzzle over a toy rabbit and a barometer; a 5-and-10-cent store string of pearls and a wooden bucket of eggs; a letter bearing the single word *HELP!* and a curious gesture of the fingers; a nude corpse and a railroad-car latrine; a book on forensic medicine and a scatter rug; a handkerchief monogrammed *G* and the butt of a Turkish cigarette; red hair and false black bangs; safe-deposit vaults, keys, and a travel folder; a $52,000 jackpot; a theatre ticket-stub and a piece of sugar; a fantastic conglomeration of flying saucers, singing alarm clocks, sea serpents, midget elephants, poltergeists, cosmic rays, space ships, curvature of light, native rice paper from Nepal, rosebush bearing blackberries, snow in Liberia, and two glass jars containing a dead man's vital organs; a wooden screw, racetrack betting slips, snake ring, and cat's blood; yellowed charts, plaster casts, and a "bump" on a man's bald head; such "rare" volumes as NECRONOMICON, CULTES DES GOULES, and DE VERMIS MYSTERIIS; six silver scarabs and a Norse sea chest; a little green hat with a cocked feather; phobias, phone calls, and photographs; dolls and dollars; purple stains and perfidious swains;

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an automobile hub cap and a blizzard; — and your own wits.

10. WINNERS

The 33 prize-winning stories richly fulfill your Editors' prophecy of half a decade ago, when we wrote that "the future of the detective-crime short story is bright indeed. [The 1945 prize-winning stories] open the door to a renaissance, to a more golden era." That renaissance is here; you are now living in a more golden era of the detective short story — and that new golden era, like the peaceful uses of the atom bomb (such is our faith), is here to stay.

We now give you the glorious proof, the incontrovertible evidence, that with each passing year the mystery writers of the world are adding flesh and blood, depth and stature, to what W. Somerset Maugham has called "the immense and varied achievement of the detective writers." Here, with titles that sound like magical incantations, are the 33 prize-winning stories:

FIRST PRIZE

The Gentleman from Paris	by John Dickson Carr

SECOND PRIZES

The Lady-Killer	by Wilbur Daniel Steele
The Trial of John Nobody	by A. H. Z. Carr
Once Upon a Train	by Craig Rice & Stuart Palmer
The Orderly World of Mr. Appleby	by Stanley Ellin
One Morning They'll Hang Him	by Margery Allingham
A Boy's Will	by Q. Patrick
Love Lies Bleeding	by Philip MacDonald

THIRD PRIZES

The Case of Karen Smith	by Viola Brothers Shore
The Homesick Buick	by John D. MacDonald
"Can You Solve This Crime?"	by Jerome & Harold Prince
The Mystery of the Personal Ad	by T. S. Stribling
"I Murdered a Man"	by Miriam Allen deFord
Crime Must Have a Stop	by Anthony Boucher
The Walking Corpse	by Clayre & Michel Lipman
The Knitted Silk Scarf	by Roy Vickers
The Headprint	by Barry Perowne

SPECIAL PRIZE FOR THE BEST SHERLOCKIANA

The Six Silver Spiders	by August Derleth

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SPECIAL POSTHUMOUS AWARD

The Man from the Death House by Frederick Irving Anderson

SPECIAL PRIZE FOR THE BEST RIDDLE STORY

The Lady and the Dragon by Peter Godfrey

SPECIAL PRIZE FOR THE BEST HORROR STORY

Abracadabra, The King of the Dolls by George Everest

SPECIAL ADDED PRIZES

The Loaded House	by Francis Bonnamy
The Shadow and the Shadowed	by Will Oursler
All the Way Home	by Charlotte Armstrong
The Straw Man	by Harry Kemelman

SPECIAL PRIZES FOR THE BEST FIRST STORIES

The Rustling Tree	by J. Cameron Smith
Natural Selection	by Gilbert Thomas
Because of Soney	by Stewart C. Bailey
The Pipes Are Calling	by Dan Sontup
The Woman Who Was Afraid	by Ruth Alix Ashen
The Sheriff Went to Cincinnati	by Henry E. Giles
Cameron's Cave	by E. G. Ashton
Murder on a Bet	by H. C. Kincaid

You will recall that in our discussion of mystery-story trends last year, we pointed out that crime writers are returning to detective-story fundamentals; that they are seeking fresh, full-bodied plot ideas, and developing their themes by the ingenious dovetailing of physical action and mental reaction; that they are imaginatively fusing the intellectual and the sensational, without sacrifice of surprise in the former or shock in the latter. In other words, ratiocination is resuming its high place in the history of homicide, tempered with a newer sense of balance and a newer conception of form, rather than of formula.

This 'tec trend persists.

11. TREND

The 33 prize-winning stories reveal a continuing tendency (praise the Lord!) on the part of mystery writers to revitalize the classic form of the detective story — in which first, there must be a detective who detects; second, a detective who is the main character; and third, a detective who uses his or her reasoning powers to reach a deductive and logical solution. To confirm this analysis of the

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current criminological trend, we offer in evidence a statistical breakdown of the 33 prize-winners: 1 story is a tale of pure mystery, 1 a tale of pure horror; 8 are tales of crime, and in 4 of these 8 the forces of law and order are so strongly implied in the background that the detective-protagonist is present, though offstage; and no less than 23 of the 33 prize-winning stories are tales of legitimate and unadulterated detection, in the highest 'tec (and technical) tradition.

12. QUALITIES

The 33 prize-winning stories project the modern qualities, the moods and emotions, to be found in so-called "serious" writing — integrity of characterization; literateness of style; tour de force brilliance; fairplay with the reader; atmosphere; a deep sense of religion; the thrill of suspense and excitement; tension; irony; satire; bawdy, rowdy comedy; the aura of decadence; preoccupation with abnormality; shudders and nightmare terror; the oblique and subtle approach; flashback vividness; surprise and wonder; documentary terseness; fantasy and black magic; the marvel of miracle; case-history realism; cynicism; pathos; the flavor of bygone times; melting-pot exoticism; the force of brutality and violence; sentimental toughness and tough sentimentality; action; authenticity; — in a phrase, the sinister, grim, hard facts of life, leavened by pity and understanding.

13. SPECIES

And finally, the 33 prize-winning stories represent nearly every type of detective-crime-mystery short story — the deductive and the intuitional; the psychological and the psychiatric; the fanciful and the realistic; detection without crime and crime without detection; the solved mystery and the unsolved riddle; the locked room; the mystic and the scientific; the "inverted" and the straightforward; the sentimental and the hardboiled; the special, the speculative, and the spectacular; the human interest and the humorous; the psycho-thriller and the astro-physical; tales of suspense and suspension-of-disbelief; the regional and the romantic; the FBI and the CID; the impossible crime and the perfect crime; tales of terror, pursuit, and apprehension; the "gimmick" story; the private eye, *sans* gin, *sans* gore, *sans* gals; the Had-I-But-Known and the Had-I-Been-Keen; the atomic crime and atomic detection; the "chess puzzle" and the challenge of wits; — every important species, subspecies, and variety of the most fascinating and fabulous literary form ever invented by the mind of man in his indomitable invasion of the unknown . . .

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THE GENTLEMAN FROM PARIS

by JOHN DICKSON CARR

Carlton House Hotel,
Broadway, New-York,
14th April, 1849

My dear brother:

Were my hand more steady, Maurice, or my soul less agitated, I should have written to you before this. *All is safe:* so much I tell you at once. For the rest, I seek sleep in vain; and this is not merely because I find myself a stranger and a foreigner in New-York. Listen and judge.

We discussed, I think, the humiliation that a Frenchman must go to England ere he could take passage in a reliable ship for America. The *Britannia* steam-packet departed from Liverpool on the second of the month, and arrived here on the seventeenth. Do not smile, I implore you, when I tell you that my first visit on American soil was to Platt's Saloon, under Wallack's Theatre.

Great God, that voyage!

On my stomach I could hold not even champagne. For one of my height and breadth I was as weak as a child.

"Be good enough," I said to a fur-capped coachman, when I had struggled through the horde of Irish immigrants, "to drive me to some fashionable place of refreshment."

The coachman had no difficulty in understanding my English, which pleased me. And how extraordinary are these "saloons"!

The saloon of M. Platt was loud with the thump of hammers cracking ice, which is delivered in large blocks. Though the hand-coloured gas-globes, and the rose-paintings on the front of the bar-counter, were as fine as we could see at the Three Provincial Brothers in Paris, yet I confess that the place did not smell so agreeably. A number of gentlemen, wearing hats perhaps a trifle taller than is fashionable at home, lounged at the bar-counter and shouted. I attracted no attention until I called for a sherry cobbler.

One of the "bartenders," as they are called in New-York, gave me a sharp glance as he prepared the glass.

"Just arrived from the Old Country, I bet?" said he in no unfriendly tone.

Though it seemed strange to hear France mentioned in this way, I smiled and bowed assent.

"Italian, maybe?" said he.

This bartender, of course, could not know how deadly was the insult.

"Sir," I replied, "I am a Frenchman."

And now in truth he was pleased! His fat face opened and smiled like a distorted, gold-toothed flower.

"Is that so, now!" he exclaimed. "And what might your name be? Un-

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less" — and here his face darkened with that sudden defensiveness and suspicion which, for no reason I can discern, will often strike into American hearts — "unless," said he, "you don't want to give it?"

"Not at all," I assured him earnestly. "I am Armand de Lafayette, at your service."

My dear brother, what an extraordinary effect!

It was silence. All sounds, even the faint whistling of the gas-jets, seemed to die away in that stone-flagged room. Every man along the line of the bar was looking at me. I was conscious only of faces, mostly with whiskers under the chin instead of down the cheek-bones, turned on me in basilisk stare.

"Well, well, well!" almost sneered the bartender. "You wouldn't be no relation of the *Marquis* de Lafayette, would you?"

It was my turn to be astonished. Though our father has always forbidden us to mention the name of our late uncle, due to his republican sympathies, yet I knew he occupied small place in the history of France and it puzzled me to comprehend how these people had heard of him.

"The late Marquis de Lafayette," I was obliged to admit, "was my uncle."

"You better be careful, young feller," suddenly yelled a grimy little man with a pistol buckled under his long coat. "We don't like being diddled, we don't."

"Sir," I replied, taking my bundle of papers from my pocket and whacking them down on the bar-counter, "have the goodness to examine my credentials. Should you still doubt my identity, we can then debate the matter in any way which pleases you."

"This is furrin writing," shouted the bartender. "*I* can't read it!"

And then — how sweet was the musical sound on my ear! — I heard a voice addressing me in my own language.

"Perhaps, sir," said the voice, in excellent French and with great stateliness, "I may be able to render you some small service."

The newcomer, a slight man of dark complexion, drawn up under an old shabby cloak of military cut, stood a little way behind me. If I had met him on the boulevards, I might not have found him very prepossessing. He had a wild and wandering eye, with an even wilder shimmer of brandy. He was not very steady on his feet. And yet, Maurice, his manner! It was such that I instinctively raised my hat, and the stranger very gravely did the same.

"And to whom," said I, "have I the honour . . . ?"

"I am Thaddeus Perley, sir, at your service."

"Another furriner!" said the grimy little man, in disgust.

"I am indeed a foreigner," said M. Perley in English, with an accent like a knife. "A foreigner to this dram-shop. A foreigner to this neighbourhood. A foreigner to —" Here he paused, and his eyes acquired an

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almost frightening blaze of loathing. "Yet I never heard that the reading of French was so *very* singular an accomplishment."

Imperiously — and yet, it seemed to me, with a certain shrinking nervousness — M. Perley came closer and lifted the bundle of papers.

"Doubtless," he said loftily, "I should not be credited were I to translate these. But here," and he scanned several of the papers, "is a letter of introduction in English. It is addressed to President Zachary Taylor from the American minister at Paris."

Again, my brother, what an enormous silence! It was interrupted by a cry from the bartender, who had snatched the documents from M. Perley.

"Boys, this is no diddle," said he. "This gent is the real thing!"

"He ain't!" thundered the little grimy man, with incredulity.

"He is!" said the bartender. "I'll be a son of a roe, (*i.e.*, *biche*) if he ain't!"

Well, Maurice, you and I have seen how Paris mobs can change. Americans are even more emotional. In the wink of an eye hostility became frantic affection. My back was slapped, my hand wrung, my person jammed against the bar by a crowd fighting to order me more refreshment.

The name of Lafayette, again and again, rose like a holy diapason. In vain I asked why this should be so. They appeared to think I was joking, and roared with laughter. I thought of M. Thaddeus Perley, as one who could supply an explanation.

But in the first rush towards me M. Perley had been flung backwards. He fell sprawling in some wet stains of tobacco-juice on the floor, and now I could not see him at all. For myself, I was weak from lack of food. A full beaker of whisky, which I was obliged to drink because all eyes were on me, made my head reel. Yet I felt compelled to raise my voice above the clamour.

"Gentlemen," I implored them, "will you hear me?"

"Silence for Lafayette!" said a big but very old man, with faded red whiskers. He had tears in his eyes, and he had been humming a catch called *Yankee Doodle*. "Silence for Lafayette!"

"Believe me," said I, "I am full of gratitude for your hospitality. But I have business in New-York, business of immediate and desperate urgency. If you will allow me to pay my reckoning . . ."

"Your money's no good here, monseer," said the bartender. "You're going to get liquored-up good and proper."

"But I have no wish, believe me, to become liquored-up! It might well endanger my mission! In effect, I wish to go!"

"Wait a minute," said the little grimy man, with a cunning look. "What *is* this here business?"

You, Maurice, have called me quixotic. I deny this. You have also called me imprudent. Perhaps you are

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right; but what choice was left to me?

"Has any gentleman here," I asked, "heard of Madame Thevenet? Madame Thevenet, who lives at number 23 Thomas Street, near Hudson Street?"

I had not, of course, expected an affirmative reply. Yet, in addition to one or two snickers at mention of the street, several nodded their heads.

"Old miser woman?" asked a sportif character, who wore chequered trousers.

"I regret, sir, that you correctly describe her. Madame Thevenet is very rich. And I have come here," cried I, "to put right a damnable injustice!"

Struggle as I might, I could not free myself.

"How's that?" asked half a dozen.

"Madame Thevenet's daughter, Mademoiselle Claudine, lives in the worst of poverty at Paris. Madame herself has been brought here, under some spell, by a devil of a woman calling herself . . . Gentlemen, I implore you!"

"And I bet you," cried the little grimy man with the pistol, "you're sweet on this daughter what's-her-name?" He seemed delighted. "Ain't you, now?"

How, I ask of all Providence, could these people have surprised my secret? Yet I felt obliged to tell the truth.

"I will not conceal from you," I said, "that I have in truth a high regard for Mlle. Claudine. But this lady, believe me, is engaged to a friend of mine, an officer of artillery."

"Then what do you *get* out of it? Eh?" asked the grimy little man, with another cunning look.

The question puzzled me. I could not reply. But the bartender with the gold teeth leaned over.

"If you want to see the old Frenchie alive, monseer," said he, "you'd better git." (*Sic*, Maurice). "I hearn tell she had a stroke this morning."

But a dozen voices clamoured to keep me there, though this last intelligence sent me into despair. Then up rose the big and very old man with the faded whiskers: indeed, I had never realized how old, because he seemed so hale.

"Which of you was with Washington?" said he, suddenly taking hold of the fierce little man's neckcloth, and speaking with contempt. "Make way for the nephew of Lafayette!"

They cheered me then, Armand. They hurried me to the door, they begged me to return, they promised they would await me. One glance I sought — nor can I say why — for M. Thaddeus Perley. He was sitting at a table by a pillar, under an open gas-jet; his face whiter than ever, still wiping stains of tobacco-juice from his cloak.

Never have I seen a more mournful prospect than Thomas Street, when my cab set me down there. Perhaps it was my state of mind; for if Mme. Thevenet had died without a sou left to her daughter: you conceive it?

The houses of Thomas Street were

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faced with dingy yellow brick, and a muddy sky hung over the chimney-pots. It had been warm all day, yet I found my spirit intolerably oppressed. Though heaven knows our Parisian streets are dirty enough, we do not allow pigs in them. Except for these, nothing moved in the forsaken street save a blind street-musician, with his dog and an instrument called a banjo; but even he was silent too.

For some minutes, it seemed to me, I plied the knocker at number 23, with hideous noise. Nothing stirred. Finally, one part of the door swung open a little, as for an eye. Whereupon I heard the shifting of a floor-bolt, and both doors were swung open.

Need I say that facing me stood the woman whom we have agreed to call Mademoiselle Jezebel?

She said to me: "And then, M. Armand?"

"Madame Thevenet!" cried I. "She is still alive?"

"She is alive," replied my companion, looking up at me from under the lids of her greenish eyes. "But she is completely paralyzed."

I have never denied, Maurice, that Mlle. Jezebel has a certain attractiveness. She is not old or even middle-aged. Were it not that her complexion is as muddy as was the sky above us then, she would have been pretty.

"And as for Claudine," I said to her, "the daughter of madame —"

"You have come too late, M. Armand."

And well I remember that at this moment there rose up, in the mournful street outside, the tinkle of the banjo played by the street-musician. It moved closer, playing a popular catch whose words run something thus:

Oh, I come from Alabama
With my banjo on my knee;
I depart for Louisiana
My Susannah for to see.

Across the lips of mademoiselle flashed a smile of peculiar quality, like a razor-cut before the blood comes.

"Gold," she whispered. "Ninety thousand persons, one hears, have gone to seek it. Go to California, M. Armand. It is the only place you will find gold."

This tune, they say, is a merry tune. It did not seem so, as the dreary twanging faded away. Mlle. Jezebel, with her muddy blonde hair parted in the middle and drawn over her ears after the best fashion, faced me implacably. Her greenish eyes were wide open. Her old brown taffeta dress, full at the bust, narrow at the waist, rustled its wide skirts as she glided a step forward.

"Have the kindness," I said, "to stand aside. I wish to enter."

Hitherto in my life I had seen her docile and meek.

"You are no relative," she said. "I will not allow you to enter."

"In that case, I regret, I must."

"If you had ever spoken one kind word to *me*," whispered mademoiselle, looking up from under her eyelids, and with her breast heaving, "one gesture of love — that is to say, of

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affection — you might have shared five million francs."

"Stand aside, I say!"

"As it is, you prefer a doll-faced consumptive at Paris. So be it!"

I was raging, Maurice; I confess it; yet I drew myself up with coldness.

"You refer, perhaps to Claudine Thevenet?"

"And to whom else?"

"I might remind you, mademoiselle, that the lady is pledged to my good friend Lieutenant Delage. I have forgotten her."

"Have you?" asked our Jezebel, with her eyes on my face and a strange hungry look in them. Mlle. Jezebel added, with more pleasure: "Well, she will die. Unless you can solve a mystery."

"A mystery?"

"I should not have said mystery, M. Armand. Because it is impossible of all solution. It is an Act of God!"

Up to this time the glass-fronted doors of the vestibule had stood open behind her, against a darkness of closed shutters in the house. There breathed out of it an odour of unswept carpets, a sourness of stale living. Someone was approaching, carrying a lighted candle.

"Who speaks," called a man's voice; shaky, but as French as Mlle. Jezebel's. "Who speaks concerning an Act of God?"

I stepped across the threshold. Mademoiselle, who never left my side, immediately closed and locked the front doors. As the candle-glimmer moved still closer in gloom, I could have shouted for joy to see the man who (as I correctly guessed) I had come to meet.

"You are M. Duroc, the lawyer!" I said. "You are my brother's friend!"

M. Duroc held the candle higher, to inspect me.

He was a big, heavy man who seemed to sag in all his flesh. In compensation for his bald head, the greyish-brown moustache flowed down and parted into two hairy fans of beard on either side of his chin. He looked at me through oval gold-rimmed spectacles; in a friendly way, but yet frightened. His voice was deep and gruff, clipping the syllables, despite his fright.

"And you —" *clip-clip;* the candle-holder trembled — "you are Armand de Lafayette. I had expected you by the steam-packet today. Well! You are here. On a fool's errand, I regret."

"But why?" (And I shouted it at him, Maurice.)

I looked at mademoiselle, who was faintly smiling.

"M. Duroc!" I protested. "You wrote to my brother. You said you had persuaded madame to repent of her harshness towards her daughter!"

"Was that your duty?" asked the Jezebel, looking full at M. Duroc with her greenish eyes. "Was that your right?"

"I am a man of law," said M. Duroc. The deep monosyllables rapped, in ghostly bursts, through his parted beard. He was perspiring. "I am correct. Very correct! And yet —"

"Who nursed her?" asked the Jeze-

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bel. "Who soothed her, fed her, wore her filthy clothes, calmed her tempers endured her interminable abuse? *I* did!"

And yet, all the time she was speaking, this woman kept sidling and sliding against me, brushing my side, as though she would make sure of my presence there.

"Well!" said the lawyer, "It matters little now! This mystery . . ."

You may well believe that all these cryptic remarks, as well as reference to a mystery or an Act of God, had driven me almost frantic. I demanded to know what he meant.

"Last night," said M. Duroc, "a certain article disappeared."

"Well, well?"

"It disappeared," said M. Duroc, drawn up like a grenadier. "But it could not conceivably have disappeared. I myself swear this! Our only suggestions as to how it might have disappeared are a toy rabbit and a barometer."

"Sir," I said, "I do not wish to be discourteous. But —"

"Am I mad, you ask?"

I bowed. If any man can manage at once to look sagging and uncertain, yet stately and dignified, M. Duroc managed it then. And dignity won, I think.

"Sir," he replied, gesturing with the candle towards the rear of the house, "Madame Thevenet lies there in her bed. She is paralyzed. She can move only her eyes or partially the lips, without speech. Do you wish to see her?"

"If I am permitted."

"Yes. That would be correct. Accompany me."

And I saw the poor old woman, Maurice. Call her harridan if you like.

It was a square room of good size, whose shutters had remained closed and locked for years. Can one smell rust? In that room, with faded green wall-paper, I felt I could.

One solitary candle did little more than dispel shadow. It burned atop the mantelpiece well opposite the foot of the bed; and a shaggy man, whom I afterwards learned to be a police-officer, sat in a green-upholstered arm-chair by an unlighted coal fire in the fireplace grate, picking his teeth with a knife.

"If you please, Dr. Harding!" M. Duroc called softly in English.

The long and lean American doctor, who had been bending over the bed so as to conceal from our sight the head and shoulders of Madame Thevenet, turned round. But this cadaverous body — in such fashion were madame's head and shoulders propped up against pillows — his cadaverous body, I say, still concealed her face.

"Has there been any change?" persisted M. Duroc in English.

"There has been no change," replied the dark-complexioned Dr. Harding, "except for the worse."

"Do you want her to be moved?"

"There has never been any necessity," said the physician, picking up his beaver hat from the bed. He spoke dryly. "However, if you want to learn

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anything more about the toy rabbit or the barometer, I should hurry. The lady will die in a matter of hours, probably less."

And he stood to one side.

It was a heavy bed with four posts and a canopy. The bed-curtains, of some dullish-green material, were closely drawn on every side except the long side by which we saw Madame Thevenet in profile. Lean as a post, rigid, the strings of her cotton nightcap tightly tied under her chin, Madame Thevenet lay propped up there. But one eye rolled towards us, and it rolled horribly.

Up to this time the woman we call the Jezebel had said little. She chose this moment again to come brushing against my side. Her greenish eyes, lids half-closed, shone in the light of M. Duroc's candle. What she whispered was: "You don't really hate me, do you?"

Maurice, I make a pause here.

Since I wrote the sentence, I put down my pen, and pressed my hands over my eyes, and once more I thought. But let me try again.

I spent just two hours in the bedroom of Madame Thevenet. At the end of the time — oh, you shall hear why! — I rushed out of that bedroom, and out of number 23 Thomas Street, like the maniac I was.

The streets were full of people, of carriages, of omnibuses, at early evening. Knowing no place of refuge save the saloon from which I had come, I gave its address to a cab-driver. Since still I had swallowed no food, I may have been light-headed. Yet I wished to pour out my heart to the friends who had bidden me return there. And where were they now?

A new group, all new, lounged against the bar-counter under brighter gaslight and brighter paint. Of all those who smote me on the back and cheered, none remained save the ancient giant who had implied friendship with General Washington. *He*, alas, lay helplessly drunk with his head near a sawdust spitting-box. Nevertheless I was so moved that I took the liberty of thrusting a handful of bank-notes into his pocket. He alone remained.

Wait, there was another!

I do not believe he had remained there because of me. Yet M. Thaddeus Perley, still sitting alone at the little table by the pillar, with the open gas-jet above, stared vacantly at the empty glass in his hand.

He had named himself a foreigner; he was probably French. That was as well. For, as I lurched against the table, I was befuddled and all English had fled my wits.

"Sir," said I, "will you permit a madman to share your table?"

M. Perley gave a great start, as though roused out of thought. He was now sober: this I saw. Indeed, his shiver and haggard face were due to lack of stimulant rather than too much of it.

"Sir," he stammered, getting to his feet, "I shall be — I shall be honoured by your company." Automatically

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he opened his mouth to call for a waiter; his hand went to his pocket; he stopped.

"No, no, no!" said I. "If you insist, M. Perley, you may pay for the second bottle. The first is mine. I am sick at heart, and I would speak with a gentleman."

At these last words M. Perley's whole expression changed. He sat down, and gave me a grave courtly nod. His eyes, which were his most expressive feature, studied my face and my disarray.

"You are ill, M. de Lafayette," he said. "Have you so soon come to grief in this — this *civilized* country?"

"I have come to grief, yes. But not through civilization or the lack of it." And I banged my fist on the table. "I have come to grief, M. Perley, through miracles or magic. I have come to grief with a problem which no man's ingenuity can solve!"

M. Perley looked at me in a strange way. But someone had brought a bottle of brandy, with its accessories. M. Perley's trembling hand slopped a generous allowance into my glass, and an even more generous one into his own.

"That is very curious," he remarked, eyeing the glass. "A murder, was it?"

"No. But a valuable document has disappeared. The most thorough search by the police cannot find it."

Touch him anywhere, and he flinched. M. Perley, for some extraordinary reason, appeared to think I was mocking him.

"A document, you say?" His laugh was a trifle unearthly. "Come, now. Was it by any chance — a letter?"

"No, no! It was a will. Three large sheets of parchment, of the size you call foolscap. Listen!"

And as M. Perley added water to his brandy and gulped down about a third of it, I leaned across the table.

"Madame Thevenet, of whom you may have heard me speak in this café, was an invalid. But (until the early hours of this morning) she was not bed-ridden. She could move, and walk about her room, and so on. She had been lured away from Paris and her family by a green-eyed woman named the Jezebel.

"But a kindly lawyer of this city, M. Duroc, believed that madame suffered and had a bad conscience about her own daughter. Last night, despite the Jezebel, he persuaded madame at last to sign a will leaving all her money to this daughter.

"And the daughter, Claudine, is in mortal need of it! From my brother and myself, who have more than enough, she will not accept a sou. Her affianced, Lieutenant Delage, is as poor as she. But, unless she leaves France for Switzerland, she will die. I will not conceal from you that Claudine suffers from that dread disease we politely call consumption."

M. Perley stopped with his glass again half-way to his mouth.

He believed me now; I sensed it. Yet under the dark hair, tumbled on his forehead, his face had gone as white as his neat, mended shirt-frill.

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"So very little a thing is money!" he whispered. "So very little a thing!"

And he lifted the glass and drained it.

"You do not think I am mocking you, sir?"

"No, no!" says M. Perley, shading his eyes with one hand. "I knew myself of one such case. She is dead. Pray continue."

"Last night, I repeat, Madame Thevenet changed her mind. When M. Duroc paid his weekly evening visit with the news that I should arrive today, madame fairly chattered with eagerness and a kind of terror. Death was approaching, she said; she had a presentiment."

As I spoke, Maurice, there returned to me the image of that shadowy, arsenic-green bedroom in the shuttered house; and what M. Duroc had told me.

"Madame," I continued, "cried out to M. Duroc that he must bolt the bedroom door. She feared the Jezebel, who lurked but said nothing. M. Duroc drew up to her bedside a portable writing-desk, with two good candles. For a long time madame spoke, pouring out contrition, self-abasement, the story of an unhappy marriage, all of which M. Duroc (sweating with embarrassment) was obliged to write down until it covered three large parchment sheets.

"But it was done, M. Perley!

"The will, in effect, left everything to her daughter, Claudine. It revoked a previous will by which all had been left (and this can be done in French law, as we both know) to Jezebel of the muddy complexion and the muddy yellow hair.

"Well, then! . . .

"M. Duroc sallies out into the street, where he finds two sober fellows who come in. Madame signs the will, M. Duroc sands it, and the two men from the street affix their signatures as witnesses. Then *they* are gone. M. Duroc folds the will lengthways, and prepares to put it into his carpet-bag. Now, M. Perley, mark what follows!

" 'No, no, no!' cries madame, with the shadow of her peaked nightcap wagging on the locked shutters beyond. 'I wish to keep it — for this one night!'

" 'For this one night, madame?' asks M. Duroc.

" 'I wish to press it against my heart,' says Madame Thevenet. 'I wish to read it once, twice, a thousand times! M. Duroc, what time is it?'

"Whereupon he takes out his gold repeater, and opens it. To his astonishment it is one o'clock in the morning. Yet he touches the spring of the repeater, and its pulse-beat rings one.

" 'M. Duroc,' pleads Madame Thevenet, 'remain here with me for the rest of the night!'

" 'Madame!' cries M. Duroc, shocked to the very fans of his beard. 'That would not be correct.'

" 'Yes, you are right,' says madame. And never, swears the lawyer, has he seen her less bleary of eye, more alive with wit and cunning, more the great lady of ruin, than there in that green

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and shadowy and foul-smelling room.

"Yet this very fact puts her in more and more terror of the Jezebel, who is never seen. She points to M. Duroc's carpet-bag.

" 'I think you have much work to do, dear sir?'

"M. Duroc groaned. 'The Good Lord knows that I have!'

" 'Outside the only door of this room,' says madame, 'there is a small dressing-room. Set up your writing-desk beside the door there, so that no one may enter without your knowledge. Do your work there; you shall have a lamp or many candles. Do it,' shrieks madame, 'for the sake of Claudine and for the sake of an old friendship!'

"Very naturally, M. Duroc hesitated.

" '*She* will be hovering,' pleads Madame Thevenet, pressing the will against her breast.' *This* I shall read and read and read, and sanctify with my tears. If I find I am falling asleep,' and here the old lady looked cunning, 'I shall hide it. But no matter! Even *she* cannot penetrate through locked shutters and a guarded door.'

"Well, in fine, the lawyer at length yielded.

"He set up his writing-desk against the very doorpost outside that door. When he last saw madame, before closing the door, he saw her in profile with the green bed-curtains drawn except on that side, propped up with a tall candle burning on a table at her right hand.

"Ah, that night! I think I see M. Duroc at his writing-desk, as he has told me, in an airless dressing-room where no clock ticked. I see him, at times, removing his oval spectacles to press his smarting eyes. I see him returning to his legal papers, while his pen scratched through the wicked hours of the night.

"He heard nothing, or virtually nothing, until five o'clock in the morning. Then, which turned him cold and flabby, he heard a cry which he describes as being like that of a deaf-mute.

"The communicating door had not been bolted on Madame Thevenet's side, in case she needed help. M. Duroc rushed into the other room.

"On the table, at madame's right hand, the tall candle had burnt down to a flattish mass of wax over which still hovered a faint bluish flame. Madame herself lay rigid in her peaked nightcap. That revival of spirit last night, or remorse in her bitter heart, had brought on the last paralysis. Though M. Duroc tried to question her, she could move only her eyes.

"Then M. Duroc noticed that the will, which she had clutched as a doomed religious might clutch a crucifix, was not in her hand or on the bed.

" 'Where is the will?' he shouted at her, as though she were deaf too. 'Where is the will?'

"Madame Thevenet's eyes fixed on him. Then they moved down, and looked steadily at a trumpery toy — a rabbit, perhaps four inches high,

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made of pink velours or the like — which lay on the bed. Again she looked at M. Duroc, as though to emphasize this. Then her eyes rolled, this time with dreadful effort, towards a large barometer, shaped like a warming-pan, which hung on the wall beside the door. Three times she did this before the bluish candle-flame flickered and went out."

And I, Armand de Lafayette, paused here in my recital to M. Perley.

Again I became aware that I was seated in a garish saloon, swilling brandy, amid loud talk that beat the air. There was a thumping noise from the theatre above our heads, and faint strains of music.

"The will," I said, "was not stolen. Not even the Jezebel could have melted through locked shutters or a guarded door. The will was not hidden, because no inch of the room remains unsearched. *Yet the will is gone!*"

I threw a glance across the table at M. Perley.

To me, I am sure, the brandy had given strength and steadied my nerves. With M. Perley I was not so sure. He was a little flushed. That slightly wild look, which I had observed before, had crept up especially into one eye, giving his whole face a somewhat lop-sided appearance. Yet all his self-confidence had returned. He gave me a little crooked smile.

I struck the table.

"Do you honour me with your attention, M. Perley?"

"What song the Syrens sang," he said to me, "or what name Achilles assumed when he hid himself among women, although puzzling questions, are not beyond *all* conjecture."

"They are beyond *my* conjecture!" I cried. "And so is this!"

M. Perley extended his hand, spread the fingers, and examined them as one who owns the universe.

"It is some little time," he remarked, "since I have concerned myself with these trifles." His eyes retreated into a dream. "Yet I have given some trifling aid, in the past, to the Prefect of the Parisian police."

"You are a Frenchman! I knew it! And the police!" Seeing his lofty look, I added: "As an amateur, understood?"

"Understood!" Then his delicate hand — it would be unjust to call it claw-like — shot across the table and fastened on my arm. The strange eyes burned towards my face. "A little more detail!" he pleaded humbly. "A little more, I beg of you! This woman, for instance, you call the Jezebel?"

"It was she who met me at the house."

"And then?"

I described for him my meeting with the Jezebel, with M. Duroc, and our entrance to the sick-room, where the shaggy police-officer sat in the arm-chair and the saturnine doctor faced us from beside the bed.

"This woman," I exclaimed, with the room vividly before my eyes as I described it, "seems to have conceived for me (forgive me) a kind of passion.

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No doubt it was due to some idle compliments I once paid her at Paris.

"As I have explained, the Jezebel is *not* unattractive, even if she would only (again forgive me) wash her hair. Nevertheless, when once more she brushed my side and whispered, 'You don't really hate me, do you?' I felt little less than horror. It seemed to me that in some fashion I was responsible for the whole tragedy.

"While we stood beside the bed, M. Duroc the lawyer poured out the story I have recounted. There lay the poor paralytic, and confirmed it with her eyes. The toy rabbit, a detestable pink colour, lay in its same position on the bed. Behind me, hung against the wall by the door, was the large barometer.

"Apparently for my benefit, Madame Thevenet again went through her dumb-show with imploring eyes. She would look at the rabbit; next (as M. Duroc had not mentioned), she would roll her eyes all round her, for some desperate yet impenetrable reason, before fixing her gaze on the barometer.

"It meant . . . what?

"The lawyer spoke then. 'More light!' gulped out M. Duroc. 'If you must have closed shutters and windows, then let us at least have more light!'

"The Jezebel glided out to fetch candles. During M. Duroc's explanation he had several times mentioned my name. At first mention of it the shaggy police-officer jumped and put away his clasp-knife. He beckoned to the physician, Dr. Harding, who went over for a whispered conference.

"Whereupon the police-officer sprang up.

" 'Mr. Lafayette!' And he swung my hand pompously. 'If I'd known it was you, Mr. Lafayette, I wouldn't 'a' sat there like a bump on a log.'

" 'You are an officer of police, sir,' said I. 'Can *you* think of no explanation?'

"He shook his head.

" 'These people are Frenchies, Mr. Lafayette, and you're an American,' he said, with somewhat conspicuous lack of logic. '*If* they're telling the truth —'

" 'Let us assume that!'

" 'I can't tell you where the old lady's will is,' he stated positively. 'But I can tell you where it ain't. It ain't hidden in this room!'

" 'But surely . . . !' I began in despair.

"At this moment the Jezebel, her brown-taffeta dress rustling, glided back into the room with a handful of candles and a tin box of the new-style Lucifer matches. She lighted several candles, sticking them on any surface in their own grease.

"There were one or two fine pieces of furniture; but the mottled-marble tops were chipped and stained, the gilt sides cracked. There were a few mirrors, creating mimic spectral life. I saw a little more clearly the faded green paper of the walls, and what I perceived to be the partly open door of a cupboard. The floor was of bare boards.

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"All this while I was conscious of two pairs of eyes: the imploring gaze of Madame Thevenet, and the amorous gaze of the Jezebel. One or the other I could have endured, but both together seemed to suffocate me.

" 'Mr. Duroc here,' said the shaggy-police-officer, clapping the distressed advocate on the shoulder, 'sent a messenger in a cab at half-past five this morning. And what time did we get here? I ask you and I tell you! Six o'clock!'

"Then he shook his finger at me, in a kind of pride and fury of efficiency.

" 'Why, Mr. Lafayette, there's been fourteen men at this room from six this morning until just before you got here!'

" 'To search for Madame Thevenet's will, you mean?'

"The shaggy man nodded portentously, and folded his arms.

" 'Floor's solid.' He stamped on the bare boards. 'Walls and ceiling? Nary a inch missed. We reckon we're remarkable smart; and we are.'

" 'But Madame Thevenet,' I persisted, 'was not a complete invalid until this morning. She could move about. If she became afraid of' — the name of the Jezebel choked me — 'if she became afraid, and *did* hide the will . . .'

" 'Where'd she hide it? Tell me!'

" 'In the furniture, then?'

" 'Cabinet-makers in, Mr. Lafayette. No secret compartments.'

" 'In one of the mirrors?'

" 'Took the backs of 'em off. No will hid there.'

" 'Up the chimney!' I cried.

" 'Sent a chimney-sweep up there,' replied my companion in a ruminating way. Each time I guessed, he would leer at me in friendly and complacent challenge. 'Ye-es, I reckon we're pretty smart. But we didn't find no will.'

"The pink rabbit also seemed to leer from the bed. I saw madame's eyes. Once again, as a desperate mind will fasten on trifles, I observed the strings of the nightcap beneath her scrawny chin. But I looked again at the toy rabbit.

" 'Has it occurred to you,' I said triumphantly, 'to examine the bed and bedstead of Madame Thevenet herself?'

"My shaggy friend went to her bedside.

" 'Poor old woman,' he said. He spoke as though she were already a corpse. Then he turned round. 'We lifted her out, just as gentle as a newborn babe (didn't we ma'am?). No hollow bedposts! Nothing in the canopy! Nothing in the frame or the feather-beds or the curtains or the bedclothes!'

"Suddenly the shaggy police-officer became angry, as though he wished to be rid of the whole matter.

" 'And it ain't in the toy rabbit,' he said, 'because you can see we slit it up, if you look close. And it ain't in that barometer there. It just — ain't here.'

"There was a silence as heavy as the dusty, hot air of this room.

" 'It is here,' murmured M. Duroc

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in his gruff voice. 'It must be here!'

"The Jezebel stood there meekly, with downcast eyes.

"And I, in my turn, confess that *I* lost my head. I stalked over to the barometer, and tapped it. Its needle, which already indicated, 'Rain; cold,' moved still further towards that point.

"I was not insane enough to hit it with my fist. But I crawled on the floor, in search of a secret hiding-place. I felt along the wall. The police-officer — who kept repeating that nobody must touch anything and he would take no responsibility until he went off duty at something o'clock — the police-officer I ignored.

"What at length gave me pause was the cupboard, already thoroughly searched. In the cupboard hung a few withered dresses and gowns, as though they had shrivelled with Madame Thevenet's body. But on the shelf of the cupboard . . .

"On the shelf stood a great number of perfume-bottles: even today, I fear, many of our countrymen think perfume a substitute for water and soap; and the state of madame's hands would have confirmed this. *But*, on the shelf, were a few dusty novels. There was a crumpled and begrimed copy of yesterday's New-York *Sun*. This newspaper did not contain a will; but it did contain a black beetle, which ran out across my hand.

"In a disgust past describing, I flung down the beetle and stamped on it. I closed the cupboard door, acknowledging defeat. Madame Thevenet's will was gone. And at the same second, in that dim green room — still badly lighted, with only a few more candles — two voices cried out.

"One was my own voice:

" '*In God's name, where is it?*'

"The other was the deep voice of M. Duroc:

" '*Look at that woman! She knows!*'

"And he meant the Jezebel.

"M. Duroc, with his beard-fans a-tremble, was pointing to a mirror; a little blurred, as these mirrors were. Our Jezebel had been looking into the mirror, her back turned to us. Now she dodged, as at a stone thrown.

"With good poise our Jezebel writhed this movement into a curtsy, turning to face us. But not before I also had seen that smile — like a razor-cut before the blood comes — as well as full knowledge, mocking knowledge, shining out of wide-open eyes in the mirror.

" 'You spoke to me, M. Duroc?' She murmured the reply, also in French.

" 'Listen to me!' the lawyer said formally. 'This will is *not* missing. It is in this room. You were not here last night. Something has made you guess. You know where it is.'

" 'Are you unable to find it?' asked the Jezebel in surprise.

" 'Stand back, young man!' M. Duroc said to me. 'I ask you something, mademoiselle, in the name of justice.'

" 'Ask!' said the Jezebel.

" 'If Claudine Thevenet inherits the money to which she is entitled,

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you will be well paid; yes, overpaid! You know Claudine. You know that!'

" 'I know it.'

" 'But if the new will be *not* found,' said M. Duroc, again waving me back, 'then you inherit everything. And Claudine will die. For it will be assumed —'

" 'Yes!' said the Jezebel, with one hand pressed against her breast. 'You yourself, M. Duroc, testify that all night a candle was burning at madame's bedside. Well! The poor woman, whom *I* loved and cherished, repented of her ingratitude towards me. She burnt this new will at the candle-flame; she crushed its ashes to powder and blew them away!'

" 'Is that true?' cried M. Duroc.

" 'They will assume it,' smiled the Jezebel, 'as you say.' She looked at me. 'And for you, M. Armand!'

"She glided closer. I can only say that I saw her eyes uncovered; or, if you wish to put it so, her soul and flesh together.

" 'I would give you everything on earth,' she said. 'I will not give you the doll-face in Paris.'

" 'Listen to me!' I said to her, so agitated that I seized her shoulders. 'You are out of your senses! You cannot give Claudine to me! She will marry another man!'

" 'And do you think that matters to me,' asked the Jezebel, with her green eyes full on mine, 'as long as you still love her?'

"There was a small crash as someone dropped a knife on the floor.

"We three, I think, had completely forgotten that we were not alone. There were two spectators, although they did not comprehend our speech.

"The saturnine Dr. Harding now occupied the green arm-chair. His long thin legs, in tight black trousers with strap under the boot-instep, were crossed and looked spidery; his high beaver hat glimmered on his head. The police-officer, who was picking his teeth with a knife when I first saw him, had now dropped the knife when he tried to trim his nails.

"But both men sensed the atmosphere. Both were alert, feeling out with the tentacles of their nerves. The police-officer shouted at me.

" 'What's this gabble?' he said. 'What's a-gitting into your head?'

"Grotesquely, it was that word 'head' which gave me my inspiration.

" 'The nightcap!' I exclaimed in English.

" 'What nightcap?'

"For the nightcap of Madame Thevenet had a peak; it was large; it was tightly tied under the chin; it might well conceal a flat-pressed document which — but you understand. The police-officer, dull-witted as he appeared, grasped the meaning in a flash. And how I wished I had never spoken! For the fellow meant well, but he was not gentle.

"As I raced round the curtained sides of the bed, the police-officer was holding a candle in one hand and tearing off madame's nightcap with the other. He found no will there, no document at all; only straggly wisps of

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hair on a skull grown old before its time.

"Madame Thevenet had been a great lady, once. It must have been the last humiliation. Two tears overflowed her eyes and ran down her cheeks. She lay propped up there in a nearly sitting position; but something seemed to wrench inside her.

"And she closed her eyes forever. And the Jezebel laughed.

"That is the end of my story. That is why I rushed out of the house like a madman. The will has vanished as though by magic; or is it still there by magic? In any case, you find me at this table: grubby and dishevelled and much ashamed."

For a little time after I had finished my narrative to M. Perley in the saloon, it seemed to me that the bar-counter was a trifle quieter. But a faint stamping continued from the theatre above our heads. Then all was hushed, until a chorus rose to a tinkle of many banjos.

Oh, I come from Alabama
With my banjo on my knee;
I depart for Louisiana . . .

Enough! The song soon died away, and M. Thaddeus Perley did not even hear it.

M. Perley sat looking downwards into an empty glass, so that I could not see his face.

"Sir," he remarked almost bitterly, "you are a man of good heart. I am glad to be of service in a problem so trifling as this."

"*Trifling!*"

His voice was a little husky, but not slurred. His hand slowly turned the glass round and round.

"Will you permit two questions?" asked M. Perley.

"Two questions? Ten thousand!"

"More than two will be unnecessary." Still M. Perley did not look up. "This toy rabbit, of which so much was made: I would know its exact position on the bed?"

"It was almost at the foot of the bed, and about the middle in a cross-ways direction."

"Ah, so I had imagined. Were the three sheets of parchment, forming the will, written upon two sides or upon only one?"

"I had not told you, M. Perley. But M. Duroc said: upon one side only."

M. Perley raised his head.

His face was now flushed and distorted with drink, his eye grown wild. In his cups he was as proud as Satan, and as disdainful of others' intelligence; yet he spoke with dignity, and with careful clearness.

"It is ironic, M. de Lafayette, that I should tell you how to lay your hand on the missing will and the elusive money; since, upon my word, I have never been able to perform a like service for myself." And he smiled, as at some secret joke. "Perhaps," he added, "it is the very simplicity of the thing which puts you at fault."

I could only look at him in bewilderment.

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"Perhaps the mystery is a little *too* plain! A little *too* self-evident!"

"You mock me, sir! I will not . . ."

"Take me as I am," said M. Perley, whacking the foot of the glass on the table, "or leave me. Besides," here his wandering eye encountered a list of steam-sailings pasted against the wall, "I — I leave tomorrow by the *Parnassus* for England, and then for France."

"I meant no offence, M. Perley! If you have knowledge, speak!"

"Madame Thevenet," he said, carefully pouring himself more brandy, "hid the will in the middle of the night. Does it puzzle you that she took such precautions to hide the will? But the element of the outré must always betray itself. The Jezebel *must not* find that will! Yet Madame Thevenet trusted nobody — not even the worthy physician who attended her. If Madame were to die of a stroke, the police would be there and must soon, she was sure, discover her simple device. Even if she were paralyzed, it would ensure the presence of other persons in the room to act as unwitting guards.

"Your cardinal error," M. Perley continued dispassionately, "was one of ratiocination. You tell me that Madame Thevenet, to give you a hint, looked fixedly at some point near the foot of the bed. Why do you assume that she was looking at the toy rabbit?"

"Because," I replied hotly, "the toy rabbit was the only object she could have looked at!"

"Pardon me; but it was *not*. You several times informed me that the bed-curtains were closely drawn together on three sides. They were drawn on all but the 'long' side towards the door. Therefore the ideal reasoner, without having seen the room, may safely say that the curtains were drawn together at the foot of the bed?"

"Yes, true!"

"After looking fixedly at this point represented by the toy, Madame Thevenet then 'rolls her eyes all round her' — in your phrase. May we assume that she wishes the curtains to be drawn back, so that she may see something *beyond* the bed?"

"It is — possible, yes!"

"It is more than possible, as I shall demonstrate. Let us direct our attention, briefly, to the incongruous phenomenon of the barometer on another wall. The barometer indicates, 'Rain; cold.' "

Here M. Perley's thin shoulders drew together under the old military cloak.

"Well," he said, "the cold is on its way. Yet this day, for April, has been warm outside and indoors, oppressively hot?"

"Yes! Of course!"

"You yourself," continued M. Perley, inspecting his finger-nails, "told me what was directly opposite the foot of the bed. Let us suppose that the bed-curtains are drawn open. Madame Thevenet, in her nearly seated position, is looking *downwards*. What would she have seen?"

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"The fireplace!" I cried. "The grate of the fireplace!"

"Already we have a link with the weather. And what, as you have specifically informed me, was in the grate of the fireplace?"

"An unlighted coal fire!"

"Exactly. And what is essential for the composition of such a fire? We need coal; we need wood; but primarily and above all, we need . . ."

"*Paper!*" I cried.

"In the cupboard of that room," said M. Perley, with his disdainful little smile, "was a very crumpled and begrimed (mark that; not dusty) copy of *yesterday's* New-York *Sun*. To light fires is the most common, and indeed the best, use for our daily press. That copy had been used to build yesterday's fire. But something else, during the night, was substituted for it. You yourself remarked the extraordinarily dirty state of Madame Thevenet's hands."

M. Perley swallowed the brandy, and his flush deepened.

"Sir," he said loudly, "you will find the will crumpled up, with ends most obviously protruding, under the coal and wood in the fireplace grate. Even had anyone taken the fire to pieces, he would have found only what appeared to be dirty blank paper, written side undermost, which could never be a valuable will. It was too self-evident to be seen. — Now go!"

"Go?" I echoed stupidly.

M. Perley rose from his chair.

"Go, I say!" he shouted, with an even wilder eye. "The Jezebel could not light that fire. It was too warm, for one thing; and all day there were police-officers with instructions that an outsider must touch nothing. But now? *Madame Thevenet kept warning you that the fire must not be lighted, or the will would be destroyed!*"

"Will you await me here?" I called over my shoulder.

"Yes, yes! And perhaps there will be peace for the wretched girl with — with the lung-trouble."

Even as I ran out of the door I saw him, grotesque and pitiful, slump across the table. Hope, rising and surging, seemed to sweep me along like the crack of the cabman's whip. But when I reached my destination, hope receded.

The shaggy police-officer was just descending the front steps.

"None of us coming back here, Mr. Lafayette!" he called cheerily. "Old Mrs. What's-her-name went and burnt that will at a candle last night. — Here, what's o'clock?"

The front door was unlocked. I raced through that dark house, and burst into the rear bedroom.

The corpse still lay in the big, gloomy bed. Every candle had flickered almost down to its socket. The police-officer's clasp-knife, forgotten since he had dropped it, still lay on bare boards. But the Jezebel was there.

She knelt on the hearth, with the tin box of Lucifer matches she had brought there earlier. The match spurted, a bluish fire; I saw her eager-

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ness; she held the match to the grate.

"A Lucifer," I said, "in the hand of a Jezebel!"

And I struck her away from the grate, so that she reeled against a chair and fell. Large coals, small coals rattled down in puffs of dust as I plunged my hands into the unlighted fire. Little sticks, sawed sticks; and I found it there: crumpled parchment-sheets, but incontestably madame's will.

"M. Duroc!" I called. "M. Duroc!"

You and I, my brother Maurice, have fought the Citizen-King with bayonets as we now fight the upstart Bonapartist; we need not be ashamed of tears. I confess, then, that the tears overran my eyes and blinded me. I scarcely saw M. Duroc as he hurried into the room.

Certainly I did not see the Jezebel stealthily pick up the police-officer's knife. I noticed nothing at all until she flew at me, and stabbed me in the back.

Peace, my brother: I have assured you all is well. At that time, faith, I was not much conscious of any hurt. I bade M. Duroc, who was trembling, to wrench out the knife; I borrowed his roomy greatcoat to hide the blood; I must hurry, hurry, hurry back to that little table under the gas-jet.

I planned it all on my way back. M. Perley, apparently a stranger in this country, disliked it and was evidently very poor even in France. But *we* are not precisely paupers. Even with his intense pride, he could not refuse (for such a service) a sum which would comfort him for the rest of his life.

Back I plunged into the saloon, and hurried down it. Then I stopped. The little round table by the pillar, under the flaring gas-jet, was empty.

How long I stood there I cannot tell. The back of my shirt, which at first had seemed full of blood, now stuck to the borrowed greatcoat. All of a sudden I caught sight of the fat-faced bartender with the gold teeth, who had been on service that afternoon and had returned now. As a mark of respect, he came out from behind the bar-counter to greet me.

"Where is the gentleman who was sitting at that table?"

I pointed to it. My voice, in truth, must have sounded so hoarse and strange that he mistook it for anger.

"Don't you worry about that, monseer!" said he reassuringly. "*That's* been tended to! We threw the drunken tramp out of here!"

"You threw . . ."

"Right bang in the gutter. Had to crawl along in it before he could stand up." My bartender's face was pleased and vicious. "Ordered a bottle of best brandy, and couldn't pay for it." The face changed again. "Goddelmighty, monseer, what's wrong?"

"*I* ordered that brandy."

"*He* didn't say so, when the waiter brought me over. Just looked me up and down, crazy-like, and said a gentleman would give his I.O.U. Gentleman!"

"M. Perley," I said, restraining an

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impulse to kill that bartender, "is a friend of mine. He departs for France early tomorrow morning. Where is his hotel? Where can I find him?"

"Perley!" sneered my companion. "That ain't even his real name, I hearn tell. Gits high-and-mighty ideas from upper Broadway. But his real name's on the I.O.U."

A surge of hope, once more, almost blinded me. "Did you keep that I.O.U.?"

"Yes, I kepp it," growled the bartender, fishing in his pocket. "God knows why, but I kepp it."

And at last, Maurice, I triumphed!

True, I collapsed from my wound; and the fever would not let me remember that I must be at the dock when the *Parnassus* steam-packet departed from New-York next morning. I must remain here, shut up in a hotel-room and unable to sleep at night, until I can take ship for home. But where I failed, you can succeed. He was to leave on the morrow by the *Parnassus* for England, and then for France — so he told me. You can find him — in six months at the most. In six months, I give you my word, he will be out of misery forever!

"*I.O.U.*," reads the little slip, "*for one bottle of your best brandy, forty-five cents. Signed: Edgar A. Poe.*"

I remain, Maurice,
Your affectionate brother,
Armand

Needless to tell you, now that you have finished "The Gentleman from Paris," you have just read a brilliant tour de force — a double tour de force. Not only has John Dickson Carr devised a scintillating mystery — the "miracle" problem as distinguished from the "locked room" — but he has also challenged you to identify his detective character. The true identity of Thaddeus Perley is a magnificent "unexpected ending" — at least, we hope it was a thunderclap of surprise.

Those of you who deduced or guessed the identity of Thaddeus Perley know how lavishly Mr. Carr spread his clues throughout the story. But those of you who did not realize that Mr. Carr had a double trick up his sleeve may enjoy a recapitulation of the signs and symbols which identified Thaddeus Perley as the Father of the Detective Story, Edgar A. Poe himself.

First, there was the temporal clue: the story takes place in April 1849, exactly eight years after Poe wrote "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," and a mere six months before he died.

Next, the portrait clue: Thaddeus Perley was described as a slight man of dark complexion, wearing a shabby coat of military cut; he had a dark mustache, wild and wandering eyes, and was "in his cups" — "not very steady on his feet." Surely this is a 'tec tintype of Edgar Allan Poe.

Next, the literary clue: Perley's reference to "what song the Syrens

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sang, or what name Achilles assumed when he hid himself among women, although puzzling questions, are not beyond all *conjecture." This is a quotation from Sir Thomas Browne's "Urn-Burial," but infinitely more revealing, it is the quotation which prefaces Poe's first (and the world's first) detective story, "The Murders in the Rue Morgue."*

Next, the criminological clue: Perley's statement that he had given aid to the Prefect of the Parisian police — a reference, of course, to Monsieur G—— in "The Purloined Letter."

Next, the psychological clue: Perley's comments on the insoluble mystery brought to him by the Marquis de Lafayette: "Perhaps it is the very simplicity of the thing which puts you at fault" — "Perhaps the mystery is a little too *plain! A little* too *self-evident!" These are the precise words which Dupin used to describe the insoluble mystery in "The Purloined Letter"!*

Next, the creative clue: the missing will in "The Gentleman from Paris" is hidden in the very spirit of the missing document in "The Purloined Letter" — the perfect, the identical spirit! Indeed, as so often happens in this ingenious world of ours, the pupil has outdone the master: the hiding place of the will is even cleverer than the hiding place of the letter — no mean accomplishment by Mr. Carr, even with the advantages of 105 years of detective development.

And finally, the master clue — the name of the detective-character: it is an established fact that Poe often used assumed names, the best-known of which are Edgar A. Perry, Henri le Rennet, and Edward S. T. Grey. But on page 626, Volume II, of Hervey Allen's ISRAFEL: The Life and Times of Edgar Allan Poe (*New York: Doran, 1927), you will find a quotation from the "Reminiscences of Gabriel Harrison" ("New York Times," March, 1899). In 1844 — five years before the events in Mr. Carr's story — Gabriel Harrison ran a tobacco and wine shop in lower Manhattan; he was also president of the "White Eagle Political Club." Poe once visited Harrison's store, asked for some tobacco, discovered that he had no money to pay for it, and was given the tobacco free by Harrison. Poe was so grateful for this kindness that he wrote a campaign song for the political club and presented it to Harrison, who recalled the incident as follows:*

"I was delighted and wanted to pay him something for his trouble, but the only thing he would accept was a bag of my best coffee. As he was going I said I should like to know his name.

"'Certainly,' he answered, with a faint smile, 'Thaddeus Perley, at your service.'"

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IN VINO VERITAS

by LAWRENCE G. BLOCHMAN

THE fat Sheriff took his feet off the desk and gazed curiously at the precise, bespectacled little man opposite him.

"You sure don't look like a peace officer, Dr. Belling," he said. "Not even any of the Eastern peace officers I ever saw."

Dr. Frank Belling smiled. "As a matter of fact," he explained, "I've been deputized by the State Police for this one case only. I'm really professor of viticulture at Northeastern Agricultural College, and the police thought my special knowledge would be useful in this Tolman matter. Tell me what you know of Henry Tolman."

"Well . . ." The Sheriff hesitated. "Everyone around here knew Old Man Tolman, of course," he said, "and we knew his son Henry when he was just a kid. But when Henry started growing up, he was away at school most of the time. Then when he was twenty-one, he went to Europe to learn about the wine business in France and Italy. Three years later the old man died and left Henry his vineyards here. Henry got back to California six months after we cabled. He was wearing a reddish beard — seems like all American youngsters raise beards when they get to France — so naturally he would look different, even if it hadn't been more than three years since we'd seen him. What makes you think he might be an impostor, Dr. Belling?"

"If he's not an impostor, he may be a murderer," Dr. Belling replied. "A few weeks ago the New York State Police found a skeleton in the woods about twenty miles from New York City. The skeleton had obviously been lying there for a number of years, and the few fragments of rotted clothing that remained were no help in establishing an identity. There was no other identification, but there was a bullet rattling around inside the skull.

"The Missing Persons Bureau, after measuring the bones, reported that the skeleton might have been that of a petty racketeer and ex-bootlegger called Rusty Hull, who disappeared six years ago. Hull didn't have a police record, so the police had nothing to go on except his size and build, and the color of his hair — all of which tally pretty closely with Henry Tolman's, I've discovered since. The police went back to the woods where the skeleton was found and about a hundred yards away they picked up a gold watch engraved *To Henry Tolman on his Twenty-First Birthday.*

"Checking further, the police discovered that Tolman and Rusty Hull

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had been seen together in New York shortly before Hull disappeared. This was natural enough, since Hull had numerous winery connections dating back to Prohibition days. It is possible that Tolman killed Hull and dropped his watch while hiding the body in the woods. It is much more likely, however, that Hull killed Tolman in order to pose as the heir to a profitable winery, and that the watch was dropped while he was carrying Tolman's body from a car into the woods. I'm working on the second supposition. That's why I want to see Tolman."

The Sheriff reached for his Stetson. "I'll drive you to the vineyards," he said. "But Henry Tolman seems O.K. to me. Of course, he's had six years to build up his alibis, but he does know all about the wines that the old man used to make."

"That's exactly what I'm counting on," Dr. Belling said. "I may not be much of a cop, but I do know my wines. That's why I phoned Tolman this morning. I told him I represented an Eastern syndicate interested in buying the winery."

"And you think, if he's an imposter, he'll swallow that story?"

"I hope not. I'd rather he were suspicious. Shall we go?"

The Sheriff drove Dr. Belling five miles through the sunny afternoon. The Northern California valley, with its stone houses nestling against the vine-covered slopes, might well have been somewhere in Europe, Belling reflected as the car swung off the main highway and took a road winding up the cultivated hillside.

"This is the Tolman vineyard," the Sheriff announced.

"Stop here a moment, please," Dr. Belling said. He left the car to walk briefly among the vines. He examined the stocks, the leaves, the ripening clusters of grapes.

"Sylvaner grapes," he said, as he climbed back into the car. "They make a nice, sound, white wine."

"Around here they call it California Riesling," the Sheriff said.

"There are very few true Riesling grapes in California," Dr. Belling countered, "and these are not among them. However, the Sylvaner grape does make a wine that resembles the Rhine wines in general type."

The car groaned in second gear as it climbed to the stone winery buildings on the hilltop, where the bearded Henry Tolman met them. He ushered the two men into a cool sitting-room, full of old-fashioned furniture, faded family photographs, and lace curtains. A half-written letter lay on the table.

After they had talked about wines in general and the Tolman vineyard in particular, Henry Tolman said: "You can tell your East-coast principals, Dr. Belling, that this is not one of those upstart wineries. My father was not caught in the early Volstead panic of California winegrowers who pulled up their grapes to plant walnuts. He made wine right through Prohibition — good wine. So he didn't have to start out all over

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again after Repeal. I remember just before I went to Europe, my father laid down a wine that he said was the best Riesling vintage this state has ever seen. I'll see if I can't find a bottle. I know there are a few left, and I'd like you to taste it. I remember writing the labels."

When Tolman left the room, the Sheriff winked at Belling. "What did I tell you? He's going to prove he was here ten years ago."

Tolman came back to place a dusty, cobwebbed bottle on the table beside the half-finished letter. Then he went in search of glasses and a corkscrew, giving Belling and the Sheriff ample opportunity to compare the handwriting in the letter with that of the dusty label. The writing was identical.

"See?" the Sheriff declared.

Tolman returned to pour the wine. Dr. Belling held his glass up to the light. He breathed its fragrance. He admired its pale gold color, its flowery bouquet, before he sipped it. Then he took a full swallow, rolled it around his tongue. The wine was excellent, with a robust, fruity tang.

"Great wine, isn't it, Dr. Belling?" Tolman asked.

Belling took another swallow, closed his eyes appreciatively.

"Perfect," he said at last. "Much too perfect to fit your story. Arrest this man, Sheriff."

"Say, what — ?"

"You're going back to New York, Rusty Hull, to stand trial for the murder of Henry Tolman."

"But I am Henry Tolman!"

"You are Rusty Hull," Belling insisted, "and this superb wine was made, bottled, and labeled within the last three or four years. If you were Henry Tolman, you would know better than to try to pass this wine off as ten years old. You would know that white wine made from Sylvaner grapes reaches its peak at the age of three; that unlike most wines which mellow and achieve greatness in the bottle for decades, its best qualities fade after its early youth. This wine is brilliant. After ten years in the bottle, it would have been ordinary, dull, and insipid."

The Sheriff put down his glass and dangled a pair of handcuffs.

"Just a moment, Sheriff," Dr. Belling said. "Before we get down to business, let's finish this bottle."

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Because of the large number of reader requests, *ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE* has procured a supply of strong, handsome binders for your copies of *EQMM*. Each binder holds one complete volume — that is, six issues of the magazine. It is easy to use, handy, convenient, and economical. The price is $1.00 postpaid. Send your order and remittance to: Special Binder Dept., Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine, 570 Lexington Ave., New York 22, New York.

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YOU MUST RIDE WITH THE EDITOR . . .

Your Editors' earliest acquaintance with Rufus King's second most famous detective character, Doctor Colin Starr, took place in 1941. We were in Miami, Florida, recovering from a serious automobile accident. One sunny afternoon, on the beach, we picked up a copy of the then-current issue of "Redbook Magazine," and came upon a short story about that hilled and valleyed section of Ohio which Rufus King has named Laurel Falls, on the river that Mr. King has named the Onega — and thus met the vital, homely, altogether lovable Doctor Starr. After we had read the story, we wished for more — and Fate has a curious way of granting such wishes. The very next day we hobbled into a Miami bookstore, and there on display was a brand-new book — Rufus King's DIAGNOSIS: MURDER *— the first and only volume of Doctor Starr short stories. Naturally, we bought the book, and devoured it that night — and it is that identical copy which is now cased in red morocco leather in our collection.*

For a long time we thought that the only Doctor Starr tales were those included in the single book. How lucky it is to be wrong so often! During our never-ending search for "unknown" and forgotten stories, we discovered a whole series of Doctor Starr investigations which have never been reprinted or published in book form. Yes, Fate has a special affection for the true detective-story fan . . .

Rufus King has written to us about the origin of Doctor Starr. One day Edwin Balmer, then editor of "Redbook," called in Mr. King and outlined a series of detective stories he wanted — about a doctor in an average, small-sized American town who through his medico-legal knowledge spotted certain deaths as murders. The doctor should be gentle, kindly, and with a heart as big as Lincoln's. Thus, Doctor Colin Starr was born.

The only thing that disturbed Rufus King was a thought that kept plaguing him after the series had run a while: the typical, small American town was producing a homicide rate which, in relation to its modest population, made even Chicago in its gangster heyday take a back seat. But that persistent and nagging thought was only the author's streak of realism showing through. Detective-story fans will forgive a certain justifiable compromise with statistics . . .

The Doctor Starr story we now bring to you was originally published as "The Case of the Jet Black Sheep." With Mr. King's permission, we have

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changed the title. When we first suggested a new title, the author was not at all dismayed — he wrote, with a certain pathetic resignation, that he has become accustomed to title changes ever "since the dark ages of my first story." As a matter of fact, he found it difficult to remember any of his own titles ever being used, and "at one period seriously considered merely labeling stories Opus Number 18, Opus Number 19, etc." Far be it from us to disillusion Mr. King!

YOU MUST RIDE WITH THE WIND

by RUFUS KING

THE house was old, and Madam Tuffman was old too. Her title fell under the curious and stilted reaching for correctness which her circle in the community considered so important, perhaps, because they were not quite sure of themselves. As it was, she was a widow, and her son Ernest had married a Bertha Wollodon, who had become Mrs. Tuffman; and Mrs. Tuffman had been dowagered into Madam.

This amused her considerably, and her alive dark eyes would become more lively still at its use, because she would remember the days that were not (to her) so very far ago, when she and her pioneer contemporaries were so active with the processes of rearing and feeding and living that straining after social minutiæ was scoffed at.

She had had two daughters and four sons; and all of them were dead except Ernest, who was the one black sheep of the lot: a charming and lowering example of the truism that the good die young.

Her house was a roomy and authentic specimen of the clapboard-and-fretwork blight and had originally possessed extensive grounds, the largest portion of which had since been absorbed by the Laurel Falls Country Club, and appropriately greened and hazarded into links. It retained, however, several acres of this hilled and valleyed section of Ohio, and you could have a charming view of the town itself, and segmentary glimpses of the Onega River, from either of its frightening turrets.

Its furnishings had not advanced with the day. Its lighting fixtures were still amazed to find their pipes wired to terminals which flowered into the black magic of incandescent bulbs, and as an offshoot from the parlor, it possessed that extinct adjunct to the wooden Indian, a cozy corner.

Slight twinges in her joints had made Madam Tuffman feel — she had said — that she was getting on. They had started shortly under a year ago, and she had instigated a series of

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monthly professional calls on the part of Dr. Colin Starr: a comfort she could well afford, for Edgar, her late husband, had left her enormously rich, from a knack on his part in the manufacture of box-toed shoes. Colin's father had been Madam Tuffman's physician until his death, following which she had called upon Colin during the rare moments when she had not felt quite well.

When the dangerous turn of events forced him to look back over his files, Starr later remembered his first visit for this specific ailment of Madam Tuffman very clearly. She had received him in dark bombazine in her private upstairs living-room, which was freighted with shadow-boxed landscapes and tufted plush.

The afternoon had been a Wednesday, the 11th of September, and leaves were tending toward their first dark flush of autumn. Madam Tuffman had thought of Starr as a vigorous breath of the outdoor air as he crossed the stuffy room toward the large bay window where she sat; and she had caught his electric vitality as he joined her. She experienced, too, a tonic quality just from his bodily strength and homely features, and she regretted the necessity of withdrawing her fragile fingers from his comforting hand.

She said, "It's nothing but twinges, Doctor," and gestured tentatively toward several anatomical locations.

Starr smiled at her reassuringly and talked nonessentials while he took her blood-pressure and listened to her heart and gravely requested permission to examine her tongue.

All was as it should be for a woman of her age, which he knew to be seventy-four. He thought: "I wonder why she really sent for me, what she really wants?" He discussed her diet, or rather her total lack of any, and suggested that she cut down a little on wine: a dry Tokay she was partial to, having found its use less deleterious than water. She accepted the suggestion reservedly. He wrote out an innocuous prescription for the tweaks and began the courteous preliminaries of taking his leave; but he did not stand up, because he suddenly caught a sense of anxiety on her part for him to stay.

She said: "Have I told you that Ernest is home?"

"I had heard."

"Then you know that he got married while in Hawaii? I like her: Bertha. She's a little thing. Not anemic, but, well, not robust. She was born in Honolulu. Her parents were English, and ranched either pineapples or sugar."

Madam Tuffman's lively eyes grew veiled. She grimaced faintly and made a small deprecatory gesture; then she said: "My presence at the wedding was entirely by cable. I expected something exotic. I suppose you always do in connection with places like Hawaii. Not at all the sort of girl that Bertha really is. I prepared."

"Prepared?"

"For the homecoming." Madam

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Tuffman leaned forward and said: "I wanted to keep him here. To keep both of them here. I tried to arrange their room as a bridge, as a link."

"Between the Islands and Ohio?"

"Yes, Doctor. After Edgar made his money, we did a little looting of Europe. That was a long time ago, before the turn of the century. It was a magpie rather than a grand tour. The attic is still cluttered with cases that have never been opened. I remembered certain things, and thought that they would fit."

"For the room?"

"Yes. There were some good lacquer pieces, an excellent China rug, all very vivid in vermillions and heady tones. Then there was the paper for contrast."

"Wallpaper?"

"A hand-blocked, lush design done by an artist in London's Soho. I think he was mad. Both of them — Edgar to buy it, and the artist to make it in the first place. The design is a plethora of fantastic huge leaves of the most vivid green. I remember that the color glowed from a single candle lighted in the studio. The artist was especially proud of the fact that he had mixed the pigments himself." Madam Tuffman grimaced again, adding: "So we unpacked the rolls from their case and put it up."

"It was not a — success?"

She stared at Starr for a thoughtful moment.

"I don't know. Bertha was very kind. She professed to be delighted. Well — I suppose it will require a certain amount of time for her to get acclimated. They've only been here a few weeks."

"Then they have decided to stay?"

"I think yes. I hope yes. But I still find it somewhat unbelievable in Ernest, this sudden urge toward nesting. He resembles his Great-uncle Stuart. Both of them ran away from home at the age of sixteen. Stuart rolled on straight through his seventies, eventually dying of exhaustion at the Hotel Bruschini in Tamave, Madagascar. Well, Ernest is only thirty, and still — well, here he is."

"Perhaps because he is married?"

Yes, Madam Tuffman said, there might be an answer there. Great-uncle Stuart had shied at altars like a sensitive colt. But marriage, just as marriage, scarcely seemed ponderable enough as an anchor for such a rolling-stone as Ernest. She knew Ernest so very well. She loved him so much, perhaps because he was her youngest and, for his sins, the only one of her children who was left. She supposed that with time she would grow to love Bertha a good deal too. Her lively dark eyes fixed Starr sharply, and she said: "I feel no jealousy, Doctor. It isn't that."

"I'm sure it isn't, Mrs. Tuffman."

"And it isn't that Bertha doesn't want to love me. I think she does. I think she is uncertain about something — about happiness. Will you meet her before you go?"

"I should like to very much."

Madam Tuffman stood up.

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"We will join them in the cellar."

And Madam Tuffman explained, as they walked down waxed walnut stairs carpeted with an imperishable Turkey red, that Ernest was currently absorbed with photography, and was planning to open a studio in Laurel Falls and make it his life work.

Ernest had had, she went on, so many life works, starting as a boy with raising squabs, birds which had gradually been consumed by the family circle in ratio as his interest in the pursuit had waned. Chemistry, magic, portrait-painting, a bewildering and swift succession of interests that had culminated in a passion for the sea at sixteen, when he had run away and had shipped out of Boston on an Atlantic Fruit Company freighter for the West Indies. He had seemed to tire of his enthusiasms so quickly, which was why Madam Tuffman didn't know about this one.

The darkroom occupied a portion of the large cellar usually reserved as a storage place for winter vegetables. Pale lemon light through a safety filter left it vague, as things are vague when you open your eyes while swimming under the sea. The faces of both of them were washed with the tint lightly, both bending over a tray. Starr had never met either, and Ernest Tuffman's good looks and magnificent build registered immediately, distracting his attention from Bertha, whom Ernest's appearance and the safety filter rendered wraithlike and ethereally obscure.

It was a strange meeting, strange beyond even its setting, and brief. Ernest was glad to be home, very satisfied at settling down with a wife, with a background, with a mother, and with an ancestral estate, at last. Starr sensed that all this gladness was implied by Ernest, rather than being baldly stated, as if it were a wish rather than a reality: a generally benign condition of affairs which Ernest hoped, very much, would come true.

In contrast, Bertha seemed impelled by a peculiar eagerness, a directness, to impress Starr and (through him) Madam Tuffman and Ernest as well. She was emphatic that she did not miss Hawaii at all, that this absolute uprooting of her life — her years couldn't, Starr decided, have been more than twenty — and a subsequent transplanting several thousands of miles away with a continent and a vast space of Pacific Ocean in between, was entirely to her liking.

She touched with earnest graciousness on the link: the room which Madam Tuffman had so considerately arranged with its bright lacquers and hand-blocked wallpaper leaves so lush in their vivid green. The thoughtfulness of it. The consoling accuracy of its effect. A home away from home. To awake every morning and lie there, absorbing that brilliant emerald paradise. Had Doctor Starr heard that an artist in London had conceived it ages ago? Doctor Starr had.

She was, too, insistently enchanted with Laurel Falls; shortly, she said, Ernest would renew his boyhood ties and they would get around a little so-

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cially, and would start to entertain, as Ernest's mother wished them to. Then she showed Starr a print, lifting it from the fixing-bath, of a portrait which Ernest had taken, Starr reflectively observed, on an eight-by-ten sheet, of an eye, a wen, an ear.

Ernest said brusquely, "Our gardener," and Starr said, "Remarkable," and Bertha said brightly, "It settles so, don't you think, on the things that are really important?"

Madam Tuffman said nothing except (in reply to Starr) goodbye.

A month later Madam Tuffman phoned again. She told Starr's secretary, Miss Wadsworth, that the tweaks seemed still to be there and she would appreciate it if Dr. Starr would call. On his way to this second visit Starr still considered that a mild arthritic or rheumatic condition might be setting in, but when he heard again a listing of the twinges and their obscure locations, he dismissed the probability from his thoughts. He wanted, as was his custom, to be perfectly frank and tell Madam Tuffman that she was wasting both her money and his time, but the strength of some deep emotion which lay beneath the liveliness of her dark eyes prevented him.

So he suggested that she give his former prescription a further chance, being uncomfortably aware that she appreciated its pathetic innocuity but was grateful for its value as an excuse (yes, he thought, that was it) to bring him into the house. He realized later that it was then, at that moment, when a tacit understanding sprang up between them that the twinges would remain, and that he would dose Madam Tuffman with the most shameless simples whenever she wanted him to come.

She said after this arrangement was so psychically settled upon: "You will think me a doting parent, Doctor. Unfortunately, I am. A man once read the bumps on Ernest's head when he was a child, and said that there was nothing that Ernest couldn't do. Sort of a Carlylean possession of a fixed capacity which could be turned with equal success into any channel Ernest might choose. The latest proof seems to be golf. Ernest never played before, but he has practically lived on the links during the past month — he and Bertha."

"And photography? The studio in town?"

"Oh, that! At least we can store winter apples and potatoes in the cellar again. It seems that Ernest is already much better at the game than Bertha, who has golfed for years in Honolulu."

"Evidently a natural talent. I wish I possessed it."

"In fact, Ernest is almost as good as that Mabel Hoplin divorcée; and she, I understand, approaches being professional. I continue to refer to golf."

"They play together?"

Madam Tuffman looked vague.

"Bertha tells me so." Her eyes were once more penetratingly lively. "Ber-

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tha wanted him to. It seems that the change in climate has made her tire easily."

"That's a comforting thing about climates. You can attribute any ailment whatever to them."

"So I have found." Madam Tuffman fingered an inconsequential handkerchief deeply bordered with Brussels lace. "Are you by any chance golfing at the club this afternoon, Doctor?"

He said, after a moment: "Yes, Mrs. Tuffman. I am."

Starr did some telephoning after he left, and managed to arrange a foursome for five o'clock. He reached the clubhouse shortly before four. He found Bertha Tuffman seated on its glass-enclosed southern veranda reading a book for which she had made a plain paper dust-cover. He suggested cocktails or tea.

"Tea, if you don't mind, Doctor." Starr gave the order to a waiter, and Bertha said: "I simply don't drink. It's a habit that's missing in me constitutionally. . . . I do like your course here."

"Have you finished for the day?"

"I found nine holes enough." Her voice stayed charmingly bright. "I'm continually expecting Ernest to divorce me for a dynamo. He's indefatigable."

Starr equably shook out the climatic change between Honolulu and Ohio, and Bertha gratefully agreed that her lessening spryness was, of course, due to that. Shortly, on almost any tomorrow, she would be feeling herself again. Not that she was ill. Her laughter at this absurdity was gay and clear. She would concede brief moments of nostalgia, moments when she would lie on the rattan *chaise longue* of their bedroom and fancy, while her eyes played among the wallpaper's tropical pattern of strong green leaves, that she was back in her childhood of Hawaii. But such moments swiftly passed. No, it wasn't any illness, it was simply that she wanted to live as fully as Ernest did, to be not only a helpmeet but a teammate as well, while Ernest sprinted with his boundless bravura along his kaleidescopic succession of tracks.

Bertha said, again, that she wanted to live. Leaving the statement, this time, quite flat. Then she stood up abruptly and said, while her smile grew set and strained, that she would be right back.

Starr sat and observed through glass panes the eighteenth hole, toward which Ernest Tuffman and Mabel Hoplin (the *amateur* in divorces) were so springily walking, trailed by their flushed and sweated caddies. Then the club's perennial debutante paused at his table — an Ethel Sweetloss, starved down into the Misses and eye-shadowed into a mauve version of Mimi's penultimate gasp in *La Bohème*.

Miss Sweetloss said, huskily: "Why the dust-cover, Doctor? Brushing up on some extracurricular techniques with the knife?"

Starr broke loose from his abstrac-

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tion and stood up. He saw that Miss Sweetloss had opened the book which Bertha had been reading. He recognized the work as one of the better anthologies on famous real-life murders. He managed to smile back at Miss Sweetloss as he took the book from her hand.

"Just a busman's holiday, Miss Sweetloss — among the cyanides and the more scarlet fields of human behavior."

The successive visits did not, at the time, seem significant. Starr missed meeting Bertha or Ernest during all of them, as both were involved in a full swing of social activities. Over and above their fictional base of twinges, a *précis* of the visits simply bulked largely with Madam Tuffman's opinion that Bertha was very deeply in love with Ernest.

Madam Tuffman pointedly made something special of the fact, as if she wanted Starr to realize that it was not an ordinary love in just an affectionate or a biological sense, but that it had a devotional flavor, like a half-portion of the more notable examples such as *Romeo* and *Juliet:* a half-portion in that Madam Tuffman didn't seem so sure about Ernest as a prototype for the party of the first part. And neither, she had sensed, did Bertha.

But then, you never could tell about Ernest. Madam Tuffman had never been able to and she doubted whether anyone else ever could, even a wife. He lowered so, like thunder, and then could be gentle as a zephyrean coo from a dove. She supposed it was the trouble with having loose dynamite in his veins instead of blood. The lamb!

Golf, of course, had long been discarded as an accomplished fact, and Mabel Hoplin had as cavalierly been discarded with it. The latest flame on the horizon was a sloop. Something in the nature of Jack London's *Sea Wolf,* in which Ernest would install Bertha and (if Madam Tuffman wished — but she didn't) his mother, and away with it all to some black-flied tropical hell in the South Atlantic.

It was a midsummer visit which definitely served as an overture to the affair's desperate end.

Madam Tuffman believed that Bertha was going to have a child. She intended to bring Bertha to Starr's office on the following day, for his opinion. From her own exhaustive fund of personal experience Madam Tuffman was satisfied with the symptoms, which included, among other trivia, moody fits of a temperamental melancholy. Bertha had increasingly kept to her room, the complimentary papering of which Madam Tuffman now considered a mistake, for it seemed to be getting on Bertha's nerves. She had overheard Bertha muttering fiercely to herself: "The leaves — *the twining leaves.*"

Oddest, she thought, was Bertha's fixity of diet (again the temperamental quirk) which leaned almost exclu-

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sively toward eggs, boiled, and served at the table in their shells. These Bertha ate with bread; and as for liquids, the girl drank nothing at all during meals, but would refresh herself afterward (Madam Tuffman had determined this from observation) with plain water from a tap.

Finally, when not involved with one of her fits of melancholia, Bertha would swing to an extreme of hectic gayety, or would disclose her devotion for Ernest with depths that were embarrassingly uncomfortable both for Ernest and for Madam Tuffman. As for what a baby would do — well, what would it do? Would it bind Ernest to his wife, to his home? To any sort of normal regularity? Or would it gall as a second chain?

Starr did, on this occasion, meet Bertha. She was standing on the porch as he left the house, with her attractive small face very clear in the light of a declining sun. He was shocked at her appearance. It had a subtly unhealthy look which was significant to his practiced eye. Bertha brightened as she saw him.

"It's good to see you again, Doctor."

"Thank you. I've missed you, too."

"We've been involved. In full swing. I know now what the tail of a comet must feel like."

"I'm told that a sloop is the very latest."

"It was — but always, Doctor, something new; now it is dancing. Ernest never danced in Honolulu."

"What changed his mind?"

"The ties of his youth changed it for him, I suspect. All blondes."

"*All* blondes?"

Bertha brightly ran through a brief roster, all of whom Starr knew, and all of whom were definitely blondes. She shook her russet hair and said: "It has made me thoughtful on the subject of peroxide."

"Too permanent, I'd say. I'd favor a wig. Remember that you're dealing with a highly changeable substance."

"Yes, I do remember, Doctor."

"You're coming to my office tomorrow?"

He had rarely, he reflected, seen such a swift, such an evanescent flash of fear.

"Ernest's mother knows about the baby, Doctor?"

"She suspects. Does Ernest?"

"No. And please — I shall ask his mother to say nothing, and let me ask it of you, Doctor — to say nothing to him."

"Of course."

"Thank you, Doctor."

Starr assured Bertha gravely as to the baby, while he thought: "There is a horror in this that strikes more deeply than I can see. I think she knows. That is the truly damnable part about it — I think she knows." He felt Madam Tuffman's lively old eyes turned on him watchfully from her armchair beside a window in the office. They were as deliberate in their fixity as Bertha's eyes were evasive.

He said to Bertha: "Concerning your diet —"

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"Yes, Doctor?"

"I understand you lean somewhat exclusively toward eggs?"

"Yes, Doctor."

He studied her averted face for a while.

"Served, I believe, in their shells?"

"A habit of childhood, Doctor."

"You eat just eggs?"

"No — plain bread — no butter, Doctor."

Starr smiled at Madam Tuffman and said: "You have kept your house so much in period that I suppose even the butter is still molded with wooden presses into individual pats?"

Madam Tuffman's eyes grew impersonal.

"Rosettes, a clover, and one rather rare one, Doctor, of a little cow."

Starr turned again to Bertha.

"How long have you been restricting yourself to this diet?"

"I think since I've known about the baby."

Madam Tuffman said sharply: "No, longer — much longer."

"Perhaps. Yes, Doctor, for a while longer."

"Hasn't the monotony of it affected your appetite?"

"I'm never really hungry."

(Faint fever, lassitude, small appetite, a failure of the general health, a slight wasting of the body — it could be any one of a number of known diseases, any of the impressionable eccentricities precedent on having a child. And still he knew, and she knew — Starr felt it imperative to talk with her alone. It was well within the bounds of reason that his intuition should be entirely wrong, although he did not believe so for a minute. There *had* been Ernest's interest in photography — the inclusion of chemistry among his earlier hobbies.)

"I'm going to suggest that you go to the hospital for observation, Mrs. Tuffman."

"But Doctor — I mean, surely it won't be for many months?"

"No, but I am dissatisfied with your general condition."

Bertha looked at Starr suddenly with a strange hostility.

"I think that I prefer not to. You mustn't think me rude. I think I would prefer to stay at home, Doctor."

He observed her thoughtfully for quite a while.

"Naturally, the decision rests with you."

Her hostility faded slowly. Relief took its place. Then fright . . .

Starr's chance came later in the afternoon of the same day. The Bucklands were giving a garden party for their dahlias, or rather Nina Buckland was (Jock thought them an overblown bore), and the occasion was one of the town's inescapable yearly events.

The garden was charming and filled with dahlias and people. Starr found Bertha in a distant corner, sitting alone in a yew niche on a marble bench beneath the perpetual smirk of a cast bronze faun.

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He said: "I'm glad I found you."

For an instant he thought that she was going to leave him; but her smile came shortly, more artificial than he had ever noticed it to be, and she said: "Sit down, Doctor."

"Thank you. I've just left Ernest looking speculatively at the dahlias. Do you suppose they'll supplant the dancing as his newest life's work?"

"Possibly. Although I'm afraid they're not instantaneous enough."

"Results must spring full-blown?"

"Yes, Doctor."

"You're twenty years old, Mrs. Tuffman. I'm forty-three. That gives me the edge on you, not only as a physician, for I can exert the paternal touch. I do it rather well."

"I'm sure you do."

Starr could feel her hardening against him swiftly, and hostility again setting in beneath her pleasant outer manner.

"There is this about life, Mrs. Tuffman: We so frequently defeat our own ends by the very methods which we use to attain them. You cannot be a constant mirror, and remain yourself. And men tire rapidly of their own reflections."

"Echoes at last become hollow?"

"Yes. We're putting it in fancy language, but I know that you know what I mean. I'd like to be frank. I am your physician. I want to help you."

Bertha's voice grew older:

"It is true that I have tried to be all things to Ernest, in the way that he is all things to himself. There are some things you cannot cage. Birds and wild beasts, yes, if you wish. Bars will hold them. But not Ernest. He's the wind. You must ride with the wind, Doctor." She reached her hand out suddenly, and he was surprised at its strength as she closed it over his. "Ride for as long as, and wherever, it may blow. I've no longer any foothold on the ground. From the moment when Ernest asked me to be his wife, I've had none. I want none, Doctor. Believe that, please — I want none."

Starr found himself up against as complete a frustration here, as earlier in his office. The ripe old wisdom of Madam Tuffman recurred to him, and he thought how clearly she had cut to the matter's root when she had remarked that Bertha's love for Ernest had surpassed all affectionate or mere biological bounds, and that it was swamped in devotional seas of the more notably classical sorts.

He could understand this very well, under a fabled twist of a mouse being courted and wedded by a handsome lion: a state of affairs that was bound to upset not only the mouse's head but her entire emotional fabric too. She would try every song in her meager repertory to make last, for a little longer, that strange initial enchantment, while living in the most desperate sort of fear that her melodies would be recognized in their true categories as mouselike squeaks.

He said absently: "It is not always good to love so much."

"I don't care."

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"I know you don't. You can't help it."

"I'll never try to hold him."

"You have a good deal of wisdom, Mrs. Tuffman."

"And you have a lot of understanding, Doctor. I couldn't be more commonplace, for anyone like Ernest, and still he chose me. He chose me literally, Doctor, from all the world." She thought this over broodingly for a moment, and then she said: "I suppose the Islands helped."

"The general setting? Romance? No, I think he must have known plenty of that. I imagine he's pretty well dulled to pale moons and the scents of strange flowers."

She said fiercely: "Sometimes I lie up there in that travesty and wonder."

"Travesty?"

"Our room. Its walls mock me. Every vivid painted leaf on them seems to cry out: 'But for me, but for me, you never would have got him.' There *are* such things as obsessions, Doctor?"

"Plenty of them. They're easily got rid of."

"I've torn at it. Torn at that wallpaper with my fingernails — and then found myself doing it, and stopped doing it!"

He said to her earnestly: "Will you grant me permission to give you a more complete examination than I did today? I sha'n't suggest hospitalization again, believe me. Just in my office."

Bertha's voice, after a frightened second, was explosive in its sharpness: "*No.*"

It was impossible to efface her from his thoughts. Starr drove more slowly, then more slowly still. He felt compelled to return to her and have it out. To use force, if need be, if there were no end in persuasion. He turned the car back toward the Bucklands'. He saw the roadster leaving their entrance gates as he neared them. He recognized Bertha in the driving-seat, alone.

She did not go in the direction of the Tuffman estate, but headed north along the highway with a speed which Starr clocked at seventy. Seven miles out of town, she forked toward the right onto a country road which led to the river. Starr decreased his distance and forked too. A half-mile of abominable ruts through a copse of white oak opened suddenly on a clearing, at the farther edge of which a dilapidated inn sat on weary haunches by the river-bank. Bertha's roadster was parked near the door.

Starr was dimly aware of having heard of the place: a late-at-night rendezvous of somewhat indifferent character. He thought that someone had once told him that you could go there and they didn't bother you, about names, about who was with you, about anything at all like that. Also (it was coming back) a small public dining-room was rarely used. More intimate rooms-for-two were, among other things, a solace for the inn's general inaccessibility.

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It was intensely quiet; and curtained windows stared across the clearing at Starr blankly. The rendezvous (if it were a rendezvous) was the last thing in the world which he had expected. Still, there was no other car, and Bertha had been alone. More than anything else, this circumstance added a note to the case which absorbed him, and frightened him too. From the speed with which Bertha had driven here, Starr expected another car momentarily, with that other member without whom no rendezvous can be complete.

Fifteen minutes passed, but no other car came. The hush continued with only the faint sound of the river and the whispered stirring of restless insects. Starr crossed the clearing on foot and opened the inn's front door. An empty foyer of the dreariest nature faced him, with shut doors to right and left, and a steep narrow stairway leading to the floor above. He opened doors, and found an empty dining-room, and a taproom where a moth-eaten deer's head above the bar alone suggested life.

He went up the narrow stairs. Doors lined either side of a hall, all closed but the farthest on the left, which stood ajar. He walked to it quietly and looked in.

Bertha, seated at a table, was eating steak. Almost with the ferocity of a starving animal, she was lifting it from the plate to her mouth: large pieces of the red meat. No bread, no vegetables, nothing else at all on the table, except a pitcher of rich milk.

Starr's throat constricted harshly as he watched her, and as he thought: "She's stuffing herself, alone in this dismal place, believing herself loveless, loving so much, in the face of a death at the hands of the one whom she loves, or of his mother — far from home, savoring nothing, just filling her stomach up in order to be with him for a little longer."

Starr stood it for a moment, that wolf-like, desperately urgent quality in the way she ate, then he entered the room.

"All this is ended, Mrs. Tuffman."

Her reaction was instinctive, clouded by the depths into which she had fallen.

"I must get back before he misses me."

"Mrs. Tuffman! We are going back together. Ernest will come with us."

Bertha saw him now, and said fiercely: "Why do you persecute me? Why won't you leave me alone?"

"Come with me, please."

Bertha stood up, and her frailness seemed to stiffen into steel, strengthening her into a replica in miniature of the magnificent animal who had married her.

"Doctor Starr, if you say anything about having found me here, I shall call you a liar."

"You are making this very difficult."

"You know the character of this place, Doctor. If you voice your conclusions to anyone — *anyone* — I shall say I have never been here."

Starr went to her and placed his

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hands upon her shoulders, feeling their stiffness, the faint shivering trembles that ran through them.

"You have fought enough. Your rendezvous here was with food. Steak is no antidote for poison."

The word was out. Stark between them. Stripped of further conjecture or evasions. Bertha's strength had a bubble quality about its swift collapse, and she was limp. Starr could scarcely hear her as she said: "Doctor — what shall I do —"

He still held her, warming her coldness, her sudden utter indifference to anything left in living. A cough was coughed discreetly behind them in the doorway; and a voice, surprisingly soft when you realized the hulk that it came from, said: "Excuse *me*, lady. Just consider 'at I di'n't come." The waiter, like a gentle gorilla, closed the door.

Starr smiled down at her and said: "I can promise you again, Mrs. Tuffman, that all this is ended. We must return at once to the house. There is a certain thing which I must know."

Bertha refused to smile back.

"No matter which one it is, no matter if it's Ernest's mother, Doctor, I don't want to live."

"That decision is no longer in your hands."

He refused to let Bertha drive alone; he left his car parked at the inn and got into her roadster, taking the wheel. He wanted to say to Bertha definitely, to say it now: "Here is what I think. Here is this damnable thought that has always been in the back of my mind, and which has just crystallized into a possible fact. Let me tell you of a waiting murderer, who slept, and who waited for your coming to wake up." But he dared not — not until he was sure. For always, in the back of his head, was Madam Tuffman's dictum: "You never could tell about Ernest."

There remained, because of this dictum, a grimness to Starr's thoughts, and he drove in silence to the Bucklands', where Nina Buckland told him that Ernest had left. With one of the (dancing) blondes. Nina's friendly eyes showed plainly that she thought it a trifle queer: Bertha's solitary departure, Ernest's not so solitary departure, then Bertha's return with Starr. But she smiled socially, and swam back among her guests and dahlias.

They found Ernest waiting with Madam Tuffman in the full nightmare of her parlor. Early dinner guests were imminent, and Madam Tuffman was in wine velvet, complete with bosom and train, while a broad diamond choker concealed the valleys of her throat. She rose and held out a hand.

"So good of you to bring her back, Doctor." Her lively dark eyes turned upon Bertha. "We were worried, dear."

Ernest said heavily: "Better dress, Bertha. You knew we were dining early."

Bertha looked at Starr, and he said: "Yes, do. I have some things to dis-

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cuss with Ernest and his mother." He watched her leave the room; then he said to Madam Tuffman: "May I use the telephone, please?"

"Certainly, Doctor."

He left them in their curious silence and went into the hall. He called his office. He said to his secretary, Miss Wadsworth, that if she didn't mind, he would like to return to the Middle Ages, or at least to some points somewhat back. Would she gather some hydrogen sulphide T.S., some litmus — yes, litmus — and the small charcoal grill that was used for steak? Would she embark at once with them in a taxi and hurry to the Tuffmans'? He wanted to make an immediate if primeval test, without the use of tubes and retorts. For what? For a mixture of arsenite and acetate of copper. . . . Yes.

He rejoined Madam Tuffman and her son in the parlor, and they sat on satin and gilt beneath the unshaded bulbs of a vast ormulu chandelier. He said without preamble: "Mr. Tuffman, your wife is suffering from chronic poisoning. I believe its nature to be arsenite and acetate of copper. Her condition is serious, but not necessarily fatal. We are in time."

For a moment Ernest looked stunned, and then he said savagely: "Are you suggesting an attempt at murder, Doctor? The murder of my wife?"

"Yes, Mr. Tuffman. That's right."

Madam Tuffman broke suddenly: "I have known it all along! It has been my horror — all these months. But I would not believe it. Even against my common sense, I kept telling myself it could not be true. There are but the three of us — my son, and Bertha, and me. I would say again and again that Bertha would not take her own life, because by doing so she would also be taking the life of her child. I knew it was no doing of mine. I would not, I do not, believe that it is Ernest. Doctor, the murderer *cannot* be here!"

"The murderer is here, Mrs. Tuffman."

"Mother —"

"No, Ernest, you must let me finish. For the past year this has been on my heart like a stone. I love you, but I do not know you. Bertha loves you, but she does not know you. Whatever I have gone through, she has gone through more. She is young. I am too old to know about her sort of love any longer — the infinite variety of its sacrifices. I understand none other than my feeling for you."

"Mother —"

"Wait, Ernest. Bertha has kept silent. She has suffered this poison to bring her slowly closer to death with every day. She has refused to be examined by Doctor Starr, in dread that the finger would be pointed to you, whom she loves; or to me, whom you love. She has been prepared to face death all these terrible months, Ernest, if you wanted it that way."

"That's a lie!" Ernest blazed with rage. "I love her. I love her more than anything."

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Starr said quietly: "I must ask your patience until Miss Wadsworth gets here. She is bringing certain things."

Minutes passed, while Starr, with oblique pointers, prepared Madam Tuffman and her son with documented precedents for his belief. Bertha's case, he said, was not unique, although today it was so rare as to offer no other existent probable parallel. He touched first upon the idiosyncrasy of certain people to certain poisons, their allergy to them: many men could stand a medicinal dose of a given poison which would prove dangerous, if not fatal, to anyone who was allergic to it.

In Bertha's case, Starr believed the idiosyncrasy to be strong. The mixture of arsenite and acetate of copper had, if his thoughts were correct, been administered to her in the form of dust, and also as an arseniureted hydrogen gas which had been emitted into the air. He spoke of a Dr. G. Kirchgasser, of Coblenz, who had collected twenty-one cases of such poisoning, some of which had proven fatal. Dr. Kirchgasser's paper on the subject was still on record. Dr. Kirchgasser had stressed the fact that his cases were all of people who were allergic to the poison. Many others had lived and come under its influence in similar conditions, and had not been affected at all.

Miss Wadsworth arrived, laden, and Starr suggested that they all go upstairs. He rapped on the door of Bertha's and Ernest's room, and asked whether they might come in.

The colors of the room struck him like a blow. They alone seemed to make any sound in the deathlike stillness. With a penknife he scraped a strip of vivid green from a hand-blocked leaf of the lurid wallpaper. He immersed a piece in a glass of water. He lit charcoal. He touched litmus into the glass and considered the reaction faintly acid. Some drops of hydrogen sulphide T.S. turned the solution a pale yellow. The vapor from a piece of the paper thrown on the burning charcoal suggested an odor of garlic.

He said to Madam Tuffman: "Your artist in London's Soho had the misfortune, or ignorance, to select one of the most poisonous pigments of his day. The commercial variety of this particular pigment was known to have contained fifty-nine per cent of arsenic, and I believe that in his own mixing the artist must have used even a more lavish hand. As I have said, the known cases of chronic poisoning at that period from wallpaper of this type were noted. These particular rolls were kept through the years in your attic, cased, so its lethal properties remained intact until the rolls were opened, put up, and its poison disseminated in the form of a fine dust and a gas."

Bertha was suddenly radiant, with a whole world that was hers again.

"Then the murderer, Doctor —"

"Exactly. From now on, you have nothing to fear, because the source has been traced: The murderer is — *this room!*"

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DISTAFF DISSENSION

This time suppose we let the women fight it out . . .

On the one hand we have Katharine Fullerton Gerould, American novelist, essayist, and short-story writer. In the Introduction to THE BEST SHORT STORIES OF 1915, *the very first volume in a now-legendary series, Edward J. O'Brien wrote: "The two established writers whose sustained excellence this year is most impressive are Katharine Fullerton Gerould and Wilbur Daniel Steele." Two years later, in the Introduction to that year's collection, Mr. O'Brien again stated that "Wilbur Daniel Steele and Katharine Fullerton Gerould are still at the head of their craft."*

On the other hand we have Evelyn Scott, American novelist and poet, whose best-known work is undoubtedly THE WAVE, *and who has lived abroad a large part of her life, "very often in the English country."*

Now it seems that in 1935 Mrs. Gerould wrote an article called "Murder for Pastime," which appeared in "The Saturday Review of Literature." Evelyn Scott, writing as an expatriate from "Jove Cottage," Walberswick, Suffolk, England, disagreed with Mrs. Gerould's "presumptions as to what constitutes the fascination of the detective novel." Mrs. Gerould had insisted that the interest in a detective story is "purely intellectual"; Evelyn Scott replied that such an attitude "ignores the fact that all detective books have crime, and nearly all murder, under consideration . . . I suggest that the demand of the detective-story reader to be absolved from the sense of man's fate as tragic is, itself, a highly significant emotional requirement; and that the satisfaction of this requirement relieves man's most deep-seated fear. In the detective story and nowhere else is murder to be taken lightly . . . and more important, death itself . . . loses its awesome character and may become an appropriate theme for the most frivolous drawing room conversation."

Evelyn Scott's rebuttal contained much more, including comments on R. Austin Freeman and Dashiell Hammett, and a comparative rating (in 1935, remember) between English and American detective fiction — but more of those meaty matters in later issues. Right now, with no disrespect intended, we disagree with both ladies. We certainly do not agree with Evelyn Scott that murder is to be taken lightly in the detective story, and nowhere else, except perhaps by a tiny minority who have a special genius for mixing homicide and humor; and as for Mrs. Gerould's contention that the interest in detective stories is "purely intellectual," we think she completely disproved her own theory in one of her own short stories — which we now offer in evidence.

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THE WINE OF VIOLENCE

by KATHARINE FULLERTON GEROULD

I AM an old man now, and, like many other old men, I feel like making confession. Not of my own sins. I have always been called, I am well aware, a dilettante, and I could hardly have sinned in the ways of the particular sinners of whom I am about to speak. But I have the dilettante's liking for all realities that do not brush him too close. Throughout the case of Filippo and Rachel Upcher, I was always on the safe side of the footlights. I have no excuse for not being honest, and I have at last an excuse for speaking. It is wonderful how the death of acquaintances frees one; and I am discovering, at the end of life, the strange, lonely luxury of being able to tell the truth about nearly everyone I used to know. All the prolonged conventional disloyalties are passed away. It is extraordinary how often one is prevented from telling the blessed truth about the familiar dead because of some irrelevant survivor.

I do not know that there was much to choose between Filippo and Rachel Upcher — though the world would not agree with me. Both of them, in Solomon's words, "drank the wine of violence." I never really liked either of them, and I have never been caught by the sentimental adage that to understand is to forgive. If we are damned, it is God who damns us, and no one ventures to accuse Him of misunderstanding. It is a little late for a mere acquaintance to hark back to the Upchers, but by accident I, and I only, know the main facts that the world has so long been mistaken about. They were a lurid pair; they were not of my clan. But I cannot resist the wholly pious temptation to set my clan right about them. I should have done it long ago, in years when it would have made "scareheads" in the same papers that of old had had so many "scareheads" about the Upchers, but for my dear wife. She simply could not have borne it. To tell the story is part of the melancholy freedom her death has bestowed on me.

By the time you have read my apology, you will have remembered, probably with some disgust, the Upcher "horror." I am used to it, but I can still wince at it. I have always been pleased to recognize that life, as my friends lived it, was not in the least like the newspapers. Not to be like the newspapers was as good a test of caste as another. Perhaps it is well for a man to realize, once in his time, that at all events the newspapers are a good deal like life. In any case, when

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you have known fairly well a man sentenced and executed for murder, you never feel again like saying that "one doesn't know" people who sue for breach of promise. After all, every one of us knows people who accept alimony. But I've enough grudge against our newspapers to be glad that my true tale comes too late for even the *Orb* to get an "extra" out of it. The *Orb* made enough, in its time, out of the Upchers. On the day when the charwoman gave her evidence against Filippo Upcher, the last copies of the evening edition sold in the New York streets for five dollars each. I have said enough to recall the case to you, and enough, I hope, to explain that it's the kind of thing I am very little used to dealing with. "Oblige me by referring to the files," if you want the charwoman's evidence. Now I may as well get to my story. I want it, frankly, off my hands . . .

I knew Filippo Upcher years ago; knew him rather well in a world where the word "friend" is seldom correctly used. We were "pals," rather, I should think: ate and drank together at Upcher's extraordinary hours, and didn't often see each other's wives. It was Upcher's big period. London and New York went, docile enough, to see him act Othello. He used to make every one weep over Desdemona, I know, and that is more than Shakespeare unassisted has always managed. Perhaps if he hadn't done Othello so well, with such a show of barbaric passion — It was my "little" period, if I may say it; when I was having the inevitable try at writing plays. I soon found that I could not write them, but meanwhile I lived for a little in the odd flare of the theatric world. Filippo Upcher — he always stuck, even in playbills, you remember, to the absurd name — I had met in my Harvard days, and I found him again at the very heart of that flare. The fact that his mother was an Italian whose maiden name had been brushed across with a title got him into certain drawing-rooms that his waistcoats would have kept him out of. She helped him out, for example, in Boston — where "baton sinister" is considered, I feel sure, merely an ancient heraldic term. Rachel Upcher, his wife, I used to see occasionally. She had left the stage before she married Upcher, and I fancy her tense renditions of Ibsen were the last thing that ever attracted him. My first recollection of her is in a *pose plastique* of passionate regret that she had never, in her brief career, had an opportunity to do *Ghosts*. *Rosmersholm*, I believe, was as far as she ever went. She had beauty of the incongruous kind that makes you wonder when, where, and how the woman stole the mask. She is absolutely the only person I ever met who gave you the original of the much-imitated "mysterious" type. She was eternally mysterious — and, every day, quite impossible. It wasn't to be expected that poor Evie should care to see much of her, and I never put

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the question that Mrs. Upcher seemed to be always wanting to refuse to answer. The fact is that the only time I ever took poor Evie there, Filippo and his wife quarreled so vulgarly and violently that we came away immediately after dinner. It would have been indecent to stay. You were sure that he would beat her as soon as you left, but also that before he had hurt her much, she would have cut his head open with a plate. Very much, you see, in the style of the newspapers. I saw Filippo at the club we both had the habit of, and, on his more peaceful days, liked him fairly well. When his violent blood rose beneath his clear skin, I would have piled up any number of fictitious engagements to avoid him. He was unspeakable then: unappeasable, vitriolic, scarce human. You felt, on such days, that he wanted his *entrée* smeared with blood, and you lunched at another table so that at least the blood shouldn't be yours. I used to fancy whimsically that some ancestress of his had been a housemaid to the Borgias, and had got into rather distinguished "trouble."

I found, as I say, that I could not write plays. My wife and I went abroad for some years. We saw Upcher act once in London, but I didn't even look him up. That gives you the measure of our detachment. I had quite forgotten him in the succeeding years of desultory, delightful roaming over southern Europe. There are alike so much to remember and so much to forget, between Pirene and Lourdes! But the first headlines of the first newspaper that I bought on the dock, when we disembarked reluctantly in New York, presented him to me again. It was all there: the "horror," the "case," the vulgar, garish tragedy. We had landed in the thick of it. It took me some time to grasp the fact that a man whom I had called by his first name was being accused of that kind of thing. I don't need to dot my i's. You had all seen Filippo Upcher act, and you all, during his trial, bought the *Orb*. I read it myself — every sickening column that had been, with laborious speed, jotted down in the courtroom. The evidence made one feel that, if this was murder, a man who merely shoots his wife through the heart need not be considered a criminal at all. It was the very scum of crime. Rachel Upcher had disappeared after a violent quarrel with her husband, in which threats — overheard — had been freely uttered. He could give no plausible account of her. Then the whole rotten mass of evidence — fit only for a ragpicker to handle — began to come in. The mutilated body disinterred; the fragments of marked clothing; the unused railway ticket — but I really cannot go into it. I am not an *Orb* reporter. The evidence was only circumstantial, but it was, alack! almost better than direct testimony. Filippo was perfectly incoherent in defense, though he, of course, pleaded "not guilty."

The country re-echoed the sentence, as it had re-echoed every

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shriek of the evidence, from Atlantic to Pacific. The jury was out five hours — would have been out only as many minutes if it had not been for one Campbell, an undertaker, who had some doubts as to the sufficiency of the "remains" disinterred to make evidence. But the marked underclothing alone made their fragmentariness negligible. Campbell was soon convinced of that. It was confused enough, in all conscience — he told Upcher's and my friend, Ted Sloan, later — but he guessed the things the charwoman overheard were enough to convict any man; he'd stick to that. Of course, the prosecuting attorney hadn't rested his case on the imperfect state of the body, anyhow — had just brought it in to show how nasty it had been all round. It didn't even look very well for him to challenge medical experts, though a body that had been buried was a little more in his line than it was in theirs, perhaps. And any gentleman in his profession had had, he might say, more practical experience than people who lectured in colleges. He hadn't himself, though, any call from superior technical knowledge to put spokes in the wheel of justice. He guessed that was what you'd call a quibble. And he was crazy to get home — Mrs. C. was expecting her first, any time along. Sloan said the man seemed honest enough; and he was quite right — the chain of circumstance was, alas! complete. Upcher was convicted of murder in the first degree, and sentenced to death.

He didn't appeal — wouldn't, in spite of his counsel, and Sloan's impassioned advice: "Give 'em a run for their money, Filippo. Be a sport, anyhow!"

"Lord, man, all juries are alike," was the response. "They've no brains. I wouldn't have the ghost of a show, and I'm not going through that racket again, and make a worse fool of myself on the stand another time."

The only appeal he did make was not such as to give Mr. Campbell any retrospective qualms of conscience. The request was never meant to get out, but, like so many other things marked "private," it did. His petition was for being allowed to act a certain number of nights before his execution. He owed frightful sums, but, as he said, no sums, however frightful, could fail to be raised by such a device.

"It would kill your chances of a reprieve, Filippo," Sloan had told him.

"Reprieve?" Filippo had laughed. "Why, it would *prove* me guilty. It would turn all the evidence pale. But think of the box-office receipts!"

Sloan came away a little firmer for circumstantial evidence than he had been before. He wouldn't see Filippo again; wouldn't admit that it was a good epigram; wouldn't even admit that it was rather fine of Filippo to be making epigrams at all. Most people agreed with him: thought Upcher shockingly cynical. But, of course, people never take into account the difference there is between being convicted and pleading guilty. Is it not *de rigueur* that, in those circumstances, a man's manner should be that

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of innocence? Filippo's flight has always seemed to me a really fine one.

We had gone straight to my wife's family in New England, on arriving. Until I saw Sloan, I had got my sole information about Upcher from the newspapers. Sloan's account of Filippo's way of taking it roused my conscience. If a man, after all that, could show *any* decency, one owed him something. I decided, without consulting my wife about it, to go over to New York and see Filippo myself. Evie was so done up by the thought of having once dined with the Upchers that I could hardly have broken my intention to her. I told her, of course, after I returned, but to know beforehand might have meant a real illness for her. I should have spared her all of it, had it not seemed to me, at the moment, my duty to go. The interview was not easy to manage, but I used Evie's connections shamelessly, and in the end the arrangement was made. I have always been glad that I went, but I don't know anything more nerve-racking than to visit a condemned criminal whose guilt you cannot manage to doubt.

Upcher was not particularly glad to see me, but he made the situation as little strained as possible. He did no violent protesting, no arraigning of law and justice. If he had, perhaps, acted according to the dictates of his hypothetical ancestress, he at least spoke calmly enough. He seemed to regard himself less as unjustly accused than as unjustly executed, if I may say so: he looked on himself as a dead man; his calamity was irretrievable. The dead may judge, but I fancy they don't shriek. At all events, Upcher didn't. A proof of his having cast hope carelessly over his shoulder was his way of speaking of his wife. He didn't even take the trouble to use the present tense; to stress, as it were, her flesh-and-blood reality. It was "Rachel was," never "Rachel is" — as we sometimes use the past tense to indicate that people have gone out of our lives by their own fault. The way in which he spoke of her was not tactful. A franker note of hatred I've never — except perhaps once — heard struck.

"She was a devil, and only a devil could live with her."

"I think I'll tell you, Upcher, that I never liked her."

He nodded. "She was poison; and I am poisoned."

I was silent for a moment.

"You read the evidence?" he broke out. "Well, it was bad — damned bad and dirty. I'd rather be hanged straight than hear it all again. But it's the kind of thing you get dragged into sooner or later if you link yourself to a creature like that. I suppose I'm essentially vulgar, but I'm a better lot than she was — for all her looks."

It had been, all of it, about as much as I could stand, and I prepared to go. My time, in any case, was about up. I found it shockingly hard to say goodbye to Upcher.

There was nothing to do but grip his hand. "Goodbye, Filippo."

"Goodbye, old man. I'll see you —"

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The familiar phrase was extinguished on his lips. We stared at each other helplessly for an instant. Then the warder led me out.

The Upcher trial — since Filippo refused to appeal — had blown over a bit by the time I went West. My widowed sister was ill, and I left Evie and everyone, to take her to southern California. We followed the conventional route of flight from tuberculosis, and lingered a little in Arizona, looking down into the depths of the Grand Cañon. I rather hoped Letitia would stay there, for I've never seen anything else so good; but the depths spoke to her words of terror. She wanted southern California: roses, and palms, and more people. It was before the Santa Fé ran its line up to Bright Angel, and of course El Tovar wasn't built. So we went on to Santa Barbara.

There we took a house with a garden, rode daily down to the Pacific, and watched the great blue horizon waves roll ever westward to the immemorial East. "China's just across, and that is why it looks so different from the Atlantic," I used to explain to Letitia; but she was never disloyal to the North Shore of Massachusetts. She liked the rose-pink mountains, and even the romantic Mission of the Scarlet Woman; but she liked best her whist with gentle, white-shawled ladies, and the really intellectual conversations she had with certain college professors from the East.

I grew rather bored, myself, by Santa Barbara, before the winter was out. Something more exotic, too, would have been good for Letitia. There was a little colony from my sister's Holy Land, and in the evenings you could fancy yourself on Brattle Street. She had managed, even there, to befog herself in a New England atmosphere. I was sure it was bad for her throat. I won't deny, either, that there was more than anxiety at the heart of my impatience. I could not get Filippo Upcher out of my head. After all, I had once seen much of him; and, even more than that, I had seen him act a hundred times. Anyone who had seen him do Macbeth would know that Filippo Upcher could not commit a murder without afterthoughts, however little forethought there might have been in it. It was all very well for Van Vreck to speculate on Filippo's ancestry and suggest that the murder was a pretty case of atavism — holding the notion up to the light with his claret and smiling esthetically. Upcher had had a father of sorts, and he wasn't all Borgia — or housemaid. Evie never smirched her charming pages with the name of Upcher, and I was cut off from the *Orb;* but I felt sure that the San Francisco papers would announce the date of his execution in good time. I scanned them with positive fever. Nothing could rid me of the fantastic notion that there would be a terrible scene for Upcher on the other side of the grave; that death would but release him to Rachel Upcher's Stygian fury. It seemed odd that he should

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not have preferred a disgusted jury to such a ghost before its ire was spent. The thought haunted me; and there was no one in Letitia's so satisfactory circle to whom I could speak. I began to want the open; for the first time in my life, to desire the sound of unmodulated voices. Besides, Letitia's régime was silly. I took drastic measures.

It was before the blessed days of limousines, and one had to arrange a driving trip with care. Letitia behaved very well. She was really worried about her throat, and absurdly grateful to me for giving up my winter to it. I planned as comfortably as I could for her — even suggested that we should ask an acquaintance or two to join us. She preferred going alone with me, however, and I was glad. Just before we started, while I was still wrangling with would-be guides and drivers and sellers of horses, the news of Upcher's execution came. If I could have suppressed that day's newspapers in Santa Barbara, I should have done so, for, little as I had liked Filippo, I liked less hearing the comments of Letitia's friends. They discussed the case, criminologically, through an interesting evening. It was quite scientific and intolerably silly. I hurried negotiations for the trip, and bought a horse or two rather recklessly. Anything, I felt, to get off. We drove away from the hotel, waving our hands to a trim group on the porch.

The days that followed soothed me: wild and golden and increasingly lonely. We had a sort of cooking kit with us, which freed us from too detailed a schedule, and could have camped, after a fashion; but usually by sundown we made some rough tavern or other. Letitia looked askance at these, and I did not blame her. As we struck deeper in toward the mountains, the taverns disappeared, and we found in their stead lost ranches — self-sufficing, you would say, until, in the parched faces of the womenfolk, all pretense of sufficiency broke down. Letitia picked up geological specimens and was in every way admirable, but I did not wish to give her an overdose. After a little less than a fortnight, I decided to start back to Santa Barbara. We were to avoid traveling the same country twice, and our route, mapped, would eventually be a kind of rough ellipse. We had just swung round the narrow end, you might say, when our first real accident occurred. The heat had been very great, and our driver had, I suspect, drunk too much. At all events, he had not watched his horses as he should have done, and one of the poor beasts, in the mid-afternoon, fell into a desperate state with colic. We did what we could, but it was clear that we could not go on that night whither we had intended. It was a question of finding shelter, and help for the suffering animal. The sky looked threatening. I despatched the inadequate driver in search of a refuge, and set myself to impart hope to Letitia. The man returned in a surprisingly short time,

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having seen the outbuildings of a ranch house. I need not dwell on details. We made shift to get there eventually, poor collapsed beast and all. A ranchman of sorts met us and conducted Letitia to the house. The ranch belonged, he said, to a Mrs. Wace, and to Mrs. Wace, presumably, he gave her in charge. I did not, at the moment, wish to leave our horse until I saw into what hands I was resigning him. The hands seemed competent enough, and the men assured me that the animal could travel the next day. When the young man returned from the ranch house, I was quite ready to follow him back, and get news of Letitia. He left me inside a big living-room. A Chinese servant appeared presently and contrived to make me understand that Mrs. Wace would come down when she had looked after my sister. I was still thinking about the horse when I heard the rustle of skirts. Our hostess had evidently established Letitia. I turned, with I know not what beginnings of apologetic or humorous explanation on my lips. The beginning was the end, for I stood face to face with Rachel Upcher.

I have never known just how the next moments went. She recognized me instantly, and evidently to her dismay. I know that before I could shape my lips to any words that should be spoken, she had had time to sit down and to suggest, by some motion of her hand, that I should do the same. I did not sit; I stood before her. It was only when she began some phrase of conventional surprise at seeing me in that place of all places that I found speech. I made nothing of it; I had no solution; yet my message seemed too urgent for delay. All that I had suffered in my so faint connection with Filippo Upcher's tragedy returned to me in one envenomed pang. I fear that I wanted most, at the moment, to pass that pang on to the woman before me. My old impatience of her type, her cheap mysteriousness, her purposeless inscrutability, possessed me. I do not defend my mood; I only give it to you as it was. I have often noticed that crucial moments are appallingly simple to live through. The brain constructs the labyrinth afterwards. All perplexities were merged for me just then in that one desire — to speak, to wound her.

"Mrs. Wace, is it possible — but I pray Heaven it is — that you don't know?"

"What?"

"About Filippo."

"Filippo?"

"Yes, Filippo! That he is dead."

"Dead?"

"Yes — killed. Tried, sentenced, *executed*."

Her left hand dropped limply from the lace at her throat to a ruffle of her dress. "For what?"

"For murdering you."

"Me?" She seemed unbelieving.

"You must have seen the papers."

"I have seen no papers. Does one leave the world as utterly as I have left it, to read newspapers? On a

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lonely ranch like this" — she broke off. "I haven't so much as seen one for five months. I — I —" Then she pulled herself together. "Tell me. This is some horrid farce. What do you mean? For God's sake, tell me!"

I cannot remember the words in which I told her. I sketched the thing for her — the original mystery, breaking out at last into open scandal when the dismembered body was found; the course of the trial; Filippo's wretched defense; the verdict; the horrid, inevitable result.

It must have taken me, for my broken, difficult account, half an hour. Not once in that time was I interrupted. She seemed hardly to breathe. I told her the very date and hour of his execution. I could give her no comfort; only, at best, bald facts. For what exhibition of self-loathing or self-pity I had been prepared I do not know; but surely for some. I had been bracing myself throughout for any kind of scene. No scene of any kind occurred. She was hard and mute as stone.

At last I rose — hoping by the sudden gesture to break her trance. Her eyes followed me. "Terrible — terrible — beyond anything I ever dreamed." I caught the whispered words. I took the chance for pity; found myself — though I detested the woman as never before — wanting to comfort her.

"He never appealed," I reminded her. "Perhaps he was glad to die."

I stood before her, more perplexed than at any other moment of my life. At last she opened her eyes and spoke. "Leave me. And do not tell your sister who I am. I shall pull myself together by dinner-time. Go!"

I went out, and, stumbling across a Chinese servant, got him to show me my room.

Of what use would it be to recall, after all the years, what I felt and thought during the next hours? I did not try to send Letitia to Mrs. Upcher. Letitia would have been of no use, even if she had consented to go. It was sheerest wisdom to obey Rachel Upcher, and not to tell. But I had a spasm of real terror when I thought of her "pulling herself together" in her lonely chamber. I listened for a scream, a pistol-shot. It did not seem to me that a woman could hear news like that which it had been my tragic luck to give, without some according show of emotion. Yet a little later I asked myself in good faith what show could ever fit that situation. What speech, what gesture, in that hour, would have been adequate? The dangerous days, in point of fact, would probably come later. I thought more of her, in those two hours, than of Filippo. Though she might well, from all the evidence, have hated him quite honestly, hers was the ironic destiny that is harder to bear than mere martyrdom. No death had ever been more accidental, more irrelevant, more preventable than Filippo's. One fortnight sooner, she could have turned back the wheel that had now come full circle. That was to be her Hell, and — well, having

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descended into it in those two hours, I was glad enough to mount once more into the free air.

Mrs. Upcher kept her promise. She pulled herself together and came to dinner, in a high black dress without so much as a white ruche to relieve it. The manager of the ranch, a young Englishman named Floyd, dined with us. He was handsome in a bloodshot way, and a detrimental, if ever there has been one. In love with Mrs. Upcher he looked to be; that, too, in the same bloodshot way. But she clearly had him in perfect order. The mask, I suppose, had worked. Letitia did her social best, but her informing talk failed to produce any pleasant effect. It was too neat and flat. Floyd watched Mrs. Upcher, and she watched the opposite wall. I did my best to watch no one. We were rather like a fortuitous group at a provincial *table d'hôte:* dissatisfied with conditions and determined not to make acquaintance. We were all thankful, I should think, when the meal was over. Mrs. Upcher made no attempt to amuse us or make us comfortable. The young manager left for his own quarters immediately after dinner, and Letitia soon went to her room. I lingered for a moment, out of decency, thinking Rachel Upcher might want to speak to me, to ask me something, to cry out to me, to clutch me for some desperate end. She sat absolutely silent for five minutes; and, seeing that the spell, whatever it was, was not yet broken, I left her.

I did not go to bed at once. How should I have done that? I was still listening for that scream, that pistol-shot. Nothing came. I remember that, after an hour, I found it all receding from me — the Upchers' crossed emotions and perverted fates. It was like stepping out of a miasmic mist. Filippo Upcher was dead; and on the other side of the grave there had been no such encounter for him as I had imagined. And I had positively seen a demoniac Rachel Upcher waiting for him on that pale verge! I searched the room for books. There was some Ibsen, which at that moment I did not want. I rejected, one after one, nearly all the volumes that the shelves held. It was a stupid collection. I had about made up my mind to the *Idylls of the King* (they were different enough, in all conscience, from the Upcher case) when I saw a pile of magazines on a table in a distant corner. "Something sentimental," I proposed to myself, as I went over to ravage them. Underneath the magazines — a scattered lot, for the most part, of *London Graphics* and *English Illustrateds* — I found a serried pack of newspapers: San Francisco and Denver sheets, running a few months back. I had never seen a Denver newspaper, and I picked one up to read the editorials, out of a desultory curiosity rare with me. On the first page, black headlines took a familiar contour. I had stumbled on the charwoman's evidence against Filippo Upcher.

My first feeling, I remember, was

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one of impotent anger — the child's raving at the rain — that I must spend the night in that house. It was preposterous that life should ask it of me. Then I, in my turn, "pulled myself together." I went back to the newspapers and examined them all. The little file was arranged in chronological order and was coextensive with the Upcher case, from arrest to announcement of the execution.

I sat staring at the neatly folded papers for a time. They seemed to me monstrous, not fit to touch, as if they were by no means innocent of Filippo Upcher's fate. By a trick of nerves and weak lamplight there seemed to be nothing else in the room. I was alone in the world with them. How long I sat there, fixing them with eyes that must have shown clear loathing, I have never known. There are moments like that, which contrive cunningly to exist outside of Time and Space, of which you remember only the quality. But I know that when I heard steps in the corridor, I was sure for an instant that it was Filippo Upcher returning. I was too overwrought to reflect that, whatever the perils of Rachel Upcher's house might be, the intrusion of the dead Filippo was not one of them: that he would profit resolutely by the last league of those fortunate distances — if so it chanced, by the immunity of very Hell. It could not be Filippo's hand that knocked so nervously on the door. Nor was it. I opened to Rachel Upcher. The first glance at her face, her eyes, her aimless, feverish, clutching hands, showed that the spell had at last been broken. She had taken off her black dress and was wrapped in loose, floating pink.

She beckoned me out of the room.

"I am sorry — very sorry — but — I was busy with your sister when you came in, and they have given you the wrong room. I will send someone to move your things — I will show you your room."

I cannot describe her voice. The words came out with difficult, unnatural haste, like blood from a wound. Between them she clutched at this or that shred of lace. But I could deal better even with frenzy than with the mask that earlier I had so little contrived to disturb. I felt relieved, disburdened. And Filippo was safe — safe. I was free to deal as I would.

I stepped back into the room. The pile of papers no longer controlled my nerves. After all, they had been but the distant reek of the monster. I went over and lifted them.

"Is this what you mean by the wrong room?"

She must have seen at once that I had examined them; that I had sounded the whole significance of their presence there. The one on top — I had not disturbed their order — gave in clear print the date fixed for Filippo Upcher's execution: that date now a fortnight back.

"I have looked them through," I went on; "and though I didn't need to read those columns, I know just what they contain. You knew it all."

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"Yes, I knew it all."

I had not dreamed, in spite of the papers that I clutched in full view of her, that she would confess so simply. But they apparently brought speech to her lips. She did not go on at once, and when she did, she sounded curiously as Filippo Upcher in prison had sounded. Her voice touched him only with disgust. Yet she stinted no detail, and I had to hear of Filippo's vices: his vanities, his indiscretions, his infidelities, all the seven deadly sins against her pride committed by him daily. He may have been only a bounder, but his punishment had been fit for one heroic in sin. I did my best to keep that discrepancy in mind as she went on vulgarizing him. I am no cross-questioner, and I let her account move, without interruption, to the strange, fluttering tempo of her hands. Occasionally her voice found a vibrant note, but for the most part it was flat, impersonal: the voice of the actress who is not at home in the unstudied role. I do not think she gauged her effect; I am sure that she was given wholly to the task of describing her hideous attitude veraciously. There was no hint of appeal in her tone, as to some dim tribunal which I might represent; but she seemed, once started, to like to tell her story. It was not really a story — the patched portrait of a hatred, rather. Once or twice I opened my lips to cry out: "Why not, in Heaven's name, a divorce rather than this?" I always shut them without asking, and before the end I understood. The two had simply hated each other too much. They could never be adequately divorced while both beheld the sun. To walk the same earth was too oppressive, too intimate a tie.

Heaven knows — it's the one thing I don't know about it, to this day — if there was any deliberate attempt on Rachel Upcher's part to give her flight a suspicious look. There were so many ways, when once you knew for a fact that Filippo had not killed her, in which you could account for the details that earlier had seemed to point to foul play. My own notion is that she fled blindly, with no light in her eyes — no ghastly glimmer of catastrophe to come. She had covered her tracks completely because she had wished to be completely lost. She didn't wish Filippo to have even the satisfaction of knowing whether she was alive or dead. Some of her dust-throwing — the unused ticket, for example — resulted in damning evidence against Filippo. After that, coincidence labored faithfully at his undoing. No one knows, even now, whose body it was that passed for Rachel Upcher's. All other clues were abandoned at the time for the convincing one that led to her. I have sometimes wondered why I didn't ask her more questions: to whom she had originally given the marked underclothing, for example. It might have gone far toward identifying what the Country Club grounds had so unluckily given up. But to lead those tortured fragments of bone and flesh into another masquerade would

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have been too grotesque. And at that moment, in the wavering, unholy lamplight of the half-bare, half-tawdry room — the whole not unlike one of Goya's foregrounds — justice and the public were to me equally unreal. What I realized absolutely was that so long as Rachel Upcher lived, I might not speak. Horror that she was, she had somehow contrived to be the person who must be saved. I would have dragged her by the hair to the prison gates, had there been any chance of saving Filippo; but Filippo seemed to me at the moment so entirely lucky that to avenge him didn't matter. I think I felt, sitting opposite that Fury in pink, something of their own emotion. Filippo was happier in another world from her; and to do anything to bring them together — to hound her into suicide, for example — would be to play him a low trick. I could have drunk to her long life as she sat there before me. It matters little to most of us what the just ghosts think; how much less must our opinion matter to them! No; Rachel Upcher, even as I counted her spots and circles, was safe from me. I didn't want to know anything definitely incriminating about her flight, anything that would bring her within the law, or impose on me a citizen's duties. Citizens had already bungled the situation enough. If she had prepared the trap for Filippo, might that fact be forever unknown! But I really do not believe that she had. What she had done was to profit shamelessly (a weak word!) by coincidence. I have often wondered if Rachel Upcher never wavered, never shuddered, during those months of her wicked silence. That question I even put to her then, after a fashion. "It was long," she answered; "but I should do it all again. He was horrible." What can you do with hatred like that? He had been to her, as she to him, actual infection. "Poison . . . and I am poisoned." Filippo's words to me would have served his wife's turn perfectly. There was, in the conventional sense, for all her specific complaints, no "cause." She hated him, not for what he did but for what he was. She *would* have done it all again.

It is all so long ago that I could not, if I would, give you the exact words in which, at length, she made all this clear. Neither my mind nor my pen took any stenographic report of that conversation. I have given such phrases as I remember. The impression is there for life, however. Besides, there is no man who could not build up for himself any amount of literature out of that one naked fact: that Rachel Upcher knew her husband's plight, and that she lay, mute, breathless, concealed, in her lair, lest she should, by word or gesture, save him. She took the whole trial, from accusation to sentence, for a piece of sublime, unmitigated luck — a beautiful blunder of Heaven's in her behalf. That she thought of herself as guilty, I do not believe; only as — at last! — extremely fortunate. At least, as her tale went on, I heard less and

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less any accent of hesitation. She knew — oh, perfectly — how little anyone else would agree with her. She was willing to beg my silence in any attitude of humility I chose to demand. But Rachel Upcher would never accuse herself. I asked no posturing of her. She got my promise easily enough. Can you imagine my going hotfoot to wake Letitia with the story? No more than that could I go to wake New York with it. Rachel Upcher, calmed by my solemn promise (though, if you'll believe it, her own recital had already greatly calmed her), left me to seek repose. I watched her fluttering, sinister figure down the corridor, then came back to my infected room. She had not touched the pile of newspapers. I spent the night reading Ibsen, and in the morning managed so that we got off early. Mrs. Wace did not come down to breakfast, and I did not see her again. Young Floyd was in the devil of a temper, but his temper served admirably to facilitate our departure. He abandoned ranch affairs entirely to get us safely on our way. Our sick horse was in perfectly good condition, and would have given us no possible excuse for lingering. Letitia, out of sight of the ranch, delivered herself of a hesitating comment.

"Do you know, Richard, I have an idea that Mrs. Wace is not really a nice woman?"

I, too, had broken Mrs. Wace's bread, but I did not hesitate. "I think you are undoubtedly right, Letitia."

It was the only thing I have ever, until now, been able to do to avenge Filippo Upcher. Even when I learned (I always had an arrangement by which I should learn, if it occurred) of Mrs. Floyd's death, I could still do nothing. There was poor Evie, who never knew, and who, as I say, could not have borne it.

I shall be much blamed by many people, no doubt, for having promised Rachel Upcher what she asked. I can only say that anyone else, in my place, would have done the same. They were best kept apart: I don't know how else to put it. I shall be blamed, too, for not seizing my late, my twelfth-hour opportunity to eulogize Filippo Upcher — for not, at least, trying to explain him. There would be no point in trying to account for what happened by characterizing Filippo. Nothing could account for such hatred: it was simply a great natural fact. They combined, like chemical agents, to that monstrous result. Each was, to the other, poison. I tell the truth now because no one has ever doubted Upcher's guilt, and it is only common fairness that he should be cleared. Why should I, for that reason, weave flatteries about him? He did not murder his wife; but that fact has not made it any easier to call him "Filippo," which I have faithfully done since I encountered Rachel Upcher in southern California. If truth is the order of the day, let me say the other thing that for years I have not been at liberty to say: he was a frightful bounder.

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JAMES SANDOE SELECTS . . .

Which are the twelve best detective short stories ever written? You will remember that we asked a Blue Ribbon Jury of experts to select the crème de la *crime, the best of all time, among all the detective shorts written in the last 109 years. This Panel of Perfectionists was composed of James Hilton, Howard Haycraft, John Dickson Carr, Anthony Boucher, Vincent Starrett, James Sandoe, August Derleth, Viola Brothers Shore, Lee Wright, Lew D. Feldman, Charles Honce, and your Editors — representing craftsmen, critics, connoisseurs, editors, bookdealers, and readers. The final concensus, arrived at by a point-system of voting, nominated the following twelve tales —* THE GOLDEN DOZEN *— for the Homicidal Hall of Fame:*

The Hands of Mr. Ottermole . . . by Thomas Burke
The Purloined Letter . . . . . by Edgar A. Poe
The Red-Headed League . . . . . by A. Conan Doyle
The Avenging Chance . . . . . by Anthony Berkeley
The Absent-Minded Coterie . . . . by Robert Barr
The Problem of Cell 13 . . . . . by Jacques Futrelle
The Oracle of the Dog . . . . . by G. K. Chesterton
Naboth's Vineyard . . . . . by Melville Davisson Post
The Gioconda Smile . . . . . by Aldous Huxley
The Yellow Slugs . . . . . by H. C. Bailey
The Genuine Tabard . . . . . by E. C. Bentley
Suspicion . . . . . by Dorothy L. Sayers

This month we bring you Anthony Berkeley's "The Avenging Chance," sponsored by James Sandoe. As in the case of previous sponsors, James Sandoe is well-known to readers of EQMM. Among many other vocations and avocations, Mr. Sandoe is mystery editor and reviewer for the Chicago "Sun-Times," and in this capacity he has won the coveted "Edgar" awarded by the Mystery Writers of America. Mr. Sandoe's reading, evaluating, and systematic cataloguing of detective stories was the direct result of his having undergone a training for Librarianship — he is at present Assistant Professor of Bibliography at the University of Colorado; this training left Mr. Sandoe with appalling quantities of time on his hands and excellent libraries in which to spend that time. Since his initial plunge into 'tecs Jim has done a good deal of miscellaneous critical writing and compiling, and an almost endless amount of letter-writing, most of which he found remarkably stimulating, contentious, and profitable.

The compiling led — as compiling will — to his editing an anthology, MURDER: PLAIN AND FANCIFUL. *Earlier it had paved the way to a list of*

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detective stories which, in Mr. Sandoe's opinion, every self-respecting college library ought to have; a revised version of this check-list was reprinted as "Readers' Guide to Crime," in THE ART OF THE MYSTERY STORY *(edited by Howard Haycraft). In 1946 "Poetry" magazine invited Jim to open their annual series of Modern Arts lectures in Chicago; his lecture, "Dagger of the Mind," was also reprinted in* THE ART OF THE MYSTERY STORY.

James Sandoe's personal list of favorite detective short stories is both catholic and (to use his own epithet) curious. His mind, he tells us, did not fasten upon tales that are historically important, that have had a place in the development of the genre — rather upon stories which have remained memorable to him for some quality of vitality. Here, then, are his candidates for all-time honors:

The Avenging Chance	by Anthony Berkeley
The Hands of Mr. Ottermole	by Thomas Burke
The Other Hangman	by Carter Dickson
The Red-Headed League	by A. Conan Doyle
The Gioconda Smile	by Aldous Huxley
Suspicion	by Dorothy L. Sayers
Sail	by Lester Dent
The Yellow Slugs	by H. C. Bailey
The Honour of Israel Gow	by G. K. Chesterton
Death on Pine Street	by Dashiell Hammett
The Man Who Murdered in Public	by Roy Vickers

Mr. Sandoe's reason for selecting "The Avenging Chance" as one of THE GOLDEN DOZEN *is deserving of quotation:" . . . because I can recall how absolutely the story baffled and surprised me, and returning over it again, can admire its artful tour up the garden path."*

THE AVENGING CHANCE

by ANTHONY BERKELEY

ROGER SHERINGHAM was inclined to think afterwards that the Poisoned Chocolates Case, as the papers called it, was perhaps the most perfectly planned murder he had ever encountered. The motive was so obvious, when you knew where to look for it — but you didn't know; the method was so significant when you had grasped its real essentials — but

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you didn't grasp them; the traces were so thinly covered, when you had realized what was covering them — but you didn't realize. But for a piece of the merest bad luck, which the murderer could not possibly have foreseen, the crime must have been added to the classical list of great mysteries.

This is the gist of the case, as Chief-Inspector Moresby told it one evening to Roger in the latter's rooms in the Albany a week after it happened:

On Friday morning, the fifteenth of November, at half-past ten in the morning, in accordance with his invariable custom, Sir William Anstruther walked into his club in Piccadilly, the very exclusive *Rainbow Club*, and asked for his letters. The porter handed him three and a small parcel. Sir William walked over to the fireplace in the big lounge hall to open them.

A few minutes later another member entered the club, a Mr. Graham Beresford. There were a letter and a couple of circulars for him, and he also strolled over to the fireplace, nodding to Sir William, but not speaking to him. The two men only knew each other very slightly, and had probably never exchanged more than a dozen words in all.

Having glanced through his letters, Sir William opened the parcel and, after a moment, snorted with disgust. Beresford looked at him, and with a grunt Sir William thrust out a letter which had been enclosed in the parcel. Concealing a smile (Sir William's ways were a matter of some amusement to his fellow-members), Beresford read the letter. It was from a big firm of chocolate manufacturers, Mason & Sons, and set forth that they were putting on the market a new brand of liqueur-chocolates designed especially to appeal to men; would Sir William do them the honor of accepting the enclosed two-pound box and letting the firm have his candid opinion on them?

"Do they think I'm a blank chorus-girl?" fumed Sir William. "Write 'em testimonials about their blank chocolates, indeed! Blank 'em! I'll complain to the blank committee. That sort of blank thing can't blank well be allowed here."

"Well, it's an ill wind so far as I'm concerned," Beresford soothed him. "It's reminded me of something. My wife and I had a box at the Imperial last night. I bet her a box of chocolates to a hundred cigarettes that she wouldn't spot the villain by the end of the second act. She won. I must remember to get them. Have you seen it — *The Creaking Skull?*"

Sir William had not seen it, and said so with force.

"Want a box of chocolates, did you say?" he added, more mildly. "Well, take this blank one. I don't want it."

For a moment Beresford demurred politely and then, most unfortunately for himself, accepted. The money so saved meant nothing to him for he was a wealthy man; but trouble was always worth saving.

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By an extraordinarily lucky chance neither the outer wrapper of the box nor its covering letter were thrown into the fire, and this was the more fortunate in that both men had tossed the envelopes of their letters into the flames. Sir William did, indeed, make a bundle of the wrapper, letter, and string, but he handed it over to Beresford, and the latter simply dropped it inside the fender. This bundle the porter subsequently extracted, and, being a man of orderly habits, put it tidily away in the waste-paper basket, whence it was retrieved later by the police.

Of the three unconscious protagonists in the impending tragedy, Sir William was without doubt the most remarkable. Still a year or two under fifty, he looked, with his flaming red face and thick-set figure, a typical country squire of the old school, and both his manners and his language were in accordance with tradition. His habits, especially as regards women, were also in accordance with tradition — the tradition of the bold, bad baronet which he undoubtedly was.

In comparison with him, Beresford was rather an ordinary man, a tall, dark, not unhandsome fellow of two-and-thirty, quiet and reserved. His father had left him a rich man, but idleness did not appeal to him, and he had a finger in a good many business pies.

Money attracts money: Graham Beresford had inherited it, he made it, and, inevitably, he had married it, too. The daughter of a late shipowner in Liverpool, with not far off half a million in her own right. But the money was incidental, for he needed her and would have married her just as inevitably (said his friends) if she had not had a farthing. A tall, rather serious-minded, highly cultured girl, not so young that her character had not had time to form (she was twenty-five when Beresford married her, three years ago), she was the ideal wife for him. A bit of a Puritan perhaps in some ways, but Beresford, whose wild oats, though duly sown, had been a sparse crop, was ready enough to be a Puritan himself. To make no bones about it, the Beresfords succeeded in achieving that eighth wonder of the modern world, a happy marriage.

And into the middle of it there dropped, with irretrievable tragedy, the box of chocolates.

Beresford gave them to her after lunch as they sat over their coffee, with some jesting remark about paying his honorable debts, and she opened the box at once. The top layer, she noticed, seemed to consist only of kirsch and maraschino. Beresford, who did not believe in spoiling good coffee, refused when she offered him the box, and his wife ate the first one alone. As she did so she exclaimed in in surprise that the filling seemed exceedingly strong and positively burned her mouth.

Beresford explained that they were samples of a new brand and then, made curious by what his wife had

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said, took one too. A burning taste, not intolerable but much too strong to be pleasant, followed the release of the liquid, and the almond flavoring seemed quite excessive.

"By Jove," he said, "they are strong. They must be filled with neat alcohol."

"Oh, they wouldn't do that, surely," said his wife, taking another. "But they are very strong. I think I rather like them, though."

Beresford ate another, and disliked it still more. "I don't," he said with decision. "They make my tongue feel quite numb. I shouldn't eat any more of them if I were you. I think there's something wrong with them."

"Well, they're only an experiment, I suppose," she said. "But they do burn. I'm not sure whether I like them or not."

A few minutes later Beresford went out to keep a business appointment in the City. He left her still trying to make up her mind whether she liked them, and still eating them to decide. Beresford remembered that scrap of conversation afterwards very vividly, because it was the last time he saw his wife alive.

That was roughly half-past two. At a quarter to four Beresford arrived at his club from the City in a taxi, in a state of collapse. He was helped into the building by the driver and the porter, and both described him subsequently as pale to the point of ghastliness, with staring eyes and livid lips, and his skin damp and clammy. His mind seemed unaffected, however, and when they had got him up the steps he was able to walk, with the porter's help, into the lounge.

The porter, thoroughly alarmed, wanted to send for a doctor at once, but Beresford, who was the last man in the world to make a fuss, refused to let him, saying that it must be indigestion and he would be all right in a few minutes. To Sir William Anstruther, however, who was in the lounge at the time, he added after the porter had gone:

"Yes, and I believe it was those infernal chocolates you gave me, now I come to think of it. I thought there was something funny about them at the time. I'd better go and find out if my wife ——" He broke off abruptly. His body, which had been leaning back limply in his chair, suddenly heaved rigidly upright; his jaws locked together, the livid lips drawn back in a horrible grin, and his hands clenched on the arms of his chair. At the same time Sir William became aware of an unmistakable smell of bitter almonds.

Thoroughly alarmed, believing indeed that the man was dying under his eyes, Sir William raised a shout for the porter and a doctor. The other occupants of the lounge hurried up, and between them they got the convulsed body of the unconscious man into a more comfortable position. Before the doctor could arrive a telephone message was received at the club from an agitated butler asking if Mr. Beresford was there, and if so would he come home at once as Mrs.

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Beresford had been taken seriously ill. As a matter of fact, she was already dead.

Beresford did not die. He had taken less of the poison than his wife, who after his departure must have eaten at least three more of the chocolates, so that its action was less rapid on Beresford and the doctor had time to save him. As a matter of fact it turned out afterwards that he had not had a fatal dose. By about eight o'clock that night he was conscious; the next day he was practically convalescent.

As for the unfortunate Mrs. Beresford, the doctor had arrived too late to save her, and she passed away very rapidly in a deep coma.

The police had taken the matter in hand as soon as Mrs. Beresford's death was reported to them and the fact of poison established, and it was only a very short time before things had become narrowed down to the chocolates as the active agent.

Sir William was interrogated, the letter and wrapper were recovered from the waste-paper basket, and, even before the sick man was out of danger, a detective-inspector was asking for an interview with the managing-director of Mason & Sons. Scotland Yard moves quickly.

It was the police theory at this stage, based on what Sir William and the two doctors had been able to tell them, that by an act of criminal carelessness on the part of one of Mason's employees, an excessive amount of oil of bitter almonds had been included in the filling-mixture of the chocolates, for that was what the doctors had decided must be the poisoning ingredient. However, the managing-director quashed this idea at once: oil of bitter almonds, he asserted, was never used by Mason's.

He had more interesting news still. Having read with undisguised astonishment the covering letter, he at once declared that it was a forgery. No such letter, no such samples had been sent out by the firm at all; a new variety of liqueur-chocolates had never even been mooted. The fatal chocolates were their ordinary brand.

Unwrapping and examining one more closely, he called the Inspector's attention to a mark on the underside, which he suggested was the remains of a small hole drilled in the case, through which the liquid could have been extracted and the fatal filling inserted, the hole afterwards being stopped up with softened chocolate — a perfectly simple operation.

He examined it under a magnifying glass and the Inspector agreed. It was now clear to him that somebody had been trying deliberately to murder Sir William Anstruther.

Scotland Yard doubled its activities. The chocolates were sent for analysis, Sir William was interviewed again, and so was the now conscious Beresford. From the latter the doctor insisted that the news of his wife's death must be kept till the next day, as in his weakened condition the shock might be fatal, so that nothing very helpful was obtained from him.

Nor could Sir William throw any

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light on the mystery or produce a single person who might have any grounds for trying to kill him. He was living apart from his wife, who was the principal beneficiary in his will, but she was in the South of France, as the French police subsequently confirmed. His estate in Worcestershire, heavily mortgaged, was entailed and went to a nephew; but as the rent he got for it barely covered the interest on the mortgage, and the nephew was considerably better off than Sir William himself, there was no motive there. The police were at a dead end.

The analysis brought one or two interesting facts to light. Not oil of bitter almonds but nitrobenzine, a kindred substance, chiefly used in the manufacture of aniline dyes, was the somewhat surprising poison employed. Each chocolate in the upper layer contained exactly six minims of it, in a mixture of kirsch and maraschino. The chocolates in the other layers were harmless.

As to the other clues, they seemed equally useless. The sheet of Mason's notepaper was identified by Merton's, the printers, as of their work, but there was nothing to show how it had got into the murderer's possession. All that could be said was that, the edges being distinctly yellowed, it must be an old piece. The machine on which the letter had been typed, of course, could not be traced. From the wrapper, a piece of ordinary brown paper with Sir William's address handprinted on it in large capitals, there was nothing to be learned at all beyond that the parcel had been posted at the post office in Southampton Street between the hours of 8:30 and 9:30 on the previous evening.

Only one thing was quite clear. Whoever had coveted Sir William's life had no intention of paying for it with his or her own.

"And now you know as much as we do, Mr. Sheringham," concluded Chief-Inspector Moresby, "and if you can say who sent those chocolates to Sir William, you'll know a good deal more."

Roger nodded thoughtfully.

"It's a brute of a case. I met a man only yesterday who was at school with Beresford. He didn't know him very well because Beresford was on the modern side and my friend was a classical bird, but they were in the same house. He says Beresford's absolutely knocked over by his wife's death. I wish you could find out who sent those chocolates, Moresby."

"So do I, Mr. Sheringham."

"It might have been anyone in the whole world," Roger mused. "What about feminine jealousy, for instance? Sir William's private life doesn't seem to be immaculate. I daresay there's a good deal of off with the old light-o'-love and on with the new."

"Why, that's just what I've been looking into, Mr. Sheringham, sir," retorted Chief-Inspector Moresby reproachfully. "That was the first thing that came to me. Because if anything does stand out about this business it is that it's a woman's crime. Nobody

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but a woman would send poisoned chocolates to a man. Another man would send a poisoned sample of whisky, or something like that."

"That's a very sound point, Moresby," Roger meditated. "Very sound indeed. And Sir William couldn't help you?"

"Couldn't," said Moresby, not without a trace of resentment, "or wouldn't. I was inclined to believe at first that he might have his suspicions and was shielding some woman. But I don't think so now."

"Humph!" Roger did not seem quite so sure. "It's reminiscent, this case, isn't it? Didn't some lunatic once send poisoned chocolates to the Commissioner of Police himself? A good crime always gets imitated, as you know."

Moresby brightened.

"It's funny you should say that, Mr. Sheringham, because that's the very conclusion I've come to. I've tested every other theory, and so far as I know there's not a soul with an interest in Sir William's death, whether from motives of gain, revenge, or what you like, whom I haven't had to rule out. In fact, I've pretty well made up my mind that the person who sent those chocolates was some irresponsible lunatic of a woman, a social or religious fanatic who's probably never even seen him. And if that's the case," Moresby sighed, "a fat chance I have of ever laying hands on her."

"Unless Chance steps in, as it so often does," said Roger brightly, "and helps you. A tremendous lot of cases get solved by a stroke of sheer luck, don't they? *Chance the Avenger.* It would make an excellent film title. But there's a lot of truth in it. If I were superstitious, which I'm not, I should say it wasn't chance at all, but Providence avenging the victim."

"Well, Mr. Sheringham," said Moresby, who was not superstitious either, "to tell the truth, I don't mind what it is, so long as it lets me get my hands on the right person."

If Moresby had paid his visit to Roger Sheringham with any hope of tapping that gentleman's brains, he went away disappointed.

To tell the truth, Roger was inclined to agree with the Chief-Inspector's conclusion, that the attempt on the life of Sir William Anstruther and the actual murder of the unfortunate Mrs. Beresford must be the work of some unknown criminal lunatic. For this reason, although he thought about it a good deal during the next few days, he made no attempt to take the case in hand. It was the sort of affair, necessitating endless inquiries, that a private person would have neither the time nor the authority to carry out, which can be handled only by the official police. Roger's interest in it was purely academic.

It was hazard, a chance encounter nearly a week later, which translated this interest from the academic into the personal.

Roger was in Bond Street, about to go through the distressing ordeal of buying a new hat. Along the pave-

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ment he suddenly saw bearing down on him Mrs. Verreker-le-Flemming. Mrs. Verreker-le-Flemming was small, exquisite, rich, and a widow, and she sat at Roger's feet whenever he gave her the opportunity. But she talked. She talked, in fact, and talked, and talked. And Roger, who rather liked talking himself, could not bear it. He tried to dart across the road, but there was no opening in the traffic stream. He was cornered.

Mrs. Verreker-le-Flemming fastened on him gladly.

"Oh, Mr. Sheringham! *Just* the person I wanted to see. Mr. Sheringham, *do* tell me. In confidence. *Are* you taking up this dreadful business of poor Joan Beresford's death?"

Roger, the frozen and imbecile grin of civilized intercourse on his face, tried to get a word in; without result.

"I was horrified when I heard of it — simply horrified. You see, Joan and I were such *very* close friends. Quite intimate. And the awful thing, the truly *terrible* thing is that Joan brought the whole business on herself. Isn't that *appalling?*"

Roger no longer wanted to escape.

"What did you say?" he managed to insert incredulously.

"I suppose it's what they call tragic irony," Mrs. Verreker-le-Flemming chattered on. "Certainly it was tragic enough, and I've never heard anything so terribly ironical. You know about that bet she made with her husband, of course, so that he had to get her a box of chocolates, and if he hadn't Sir William would never have given him the poisoned ones and he'd have eaten them and died himself and good riddance? Well, Mr. Sheringham ——" Mrs. Verreker-le-Flemming lowered her voice to a conspirator's whisper and glanced about her in the approved manner. "I've never told anybody else this, but I'm telling you because I know you'll appreciate it. *Joan wasn't playing fair.*"

"How do you mean?" Roger asked, bewildered.

Mrs. Verreker-le-Flemming was artlessly pleased with her sensation.

"Why, she'd seen the play before. We went together, the very first week it was on. She *knew* who the villain was all the time."

"By Jove!" Roger was as impressed as Mrs. Verreker-le-Flemming could have wished. "Chance the Avenger! We're none of us immune from it."

"Poetic justice, you mean?" twittered Mrs. Verreker-le-Flemming, to whom these remarks had been somewhat obscure. "Yes, but Joan Beresford of all people! That's the extraordinary thing. I should never have thought Joan *would* do a thing like that. She was such a *nice* girl. A little close with money, of course, considering how well-off they are, but that isn't anything. Of course it was only fun, and pulling her husband's leg, but I always used to think Joan was such a *serious* girl, Mr. Sheringham. I mean, ordinary people don't talk about honor and truth, and playing the game, and all those things one takes for granted. But Joan did. She was always saying that this wasn't honor-

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able, or that wouldn't be playing the game. Well, she paid herself for not playing the game, poor girl, didn't she? Still, it all goes to show the truth of the old saying, doesn't it?"

"What old saying?" said Roger, hypnotized by this flow.

"Why, that still waters run deep. Joan must have been deep, I'm afraid." Mrs. Verreker-le-Flemming sighed. It was evidently a social error to be deep. "I mean, she certainly took me in. She can't have been quite so honorable and truthful as she was always pretending, can she? And I can't help wondering whether a girl who'd deceived her husband in a little thing like that might not — oh, well, I don't want to say anything against poor Joan now she's dead, poor darling, but she can't have been *quite* such a plaster saint after all, can she? I mean," said Mrs. Verreker-le-Flemming, in hasty extenuation of these suggestions, "I do think psychology is so very interesting, don't you, Mr. Sheringham?"

"Sometimes, very," Roger agreed gravely. "But you mentioned Sir William Anstruther just now. Do you know him, too?"

"I used to," Mrs. Verreker-le-Flemming replied, without particular interest. "Horrible man! Always running after some woman or other. And when he's tired of her, just drops her — biff! — like that. At least," added Mrs. Verreker-le-Flemming somewhat hastily, "so I've heard."

"And what happens if she refuses to be dropped?"

"Oh, dear, I'm sure I don't know. I suppose you've heard the latest?"

Mrs. Verreker-le-Flemming hurried on, perhaps a trifle more pink than the delicate aids to nature on her cheeks would have warranted.

"He's taken up with that Bryce woman now. You know, the wife of the oil man, or petrol, or whatever he made his money in. It began about three weeks ago. You'd have thought that dreadful business of being responsible, in a way, for poor Joan Beresford's death would have sobered him up a little, wouldn't you? But not a bit of it; he ——"

Roger was following another line of thought. "What a pity you weren't at the Imperial with the Beresfords that evening. She'd never have made that bet if you had been." Roger looked extremely innocent. "You weren't, I suppose?"

"I?" queried Mrs. Verreker-le-Flemming in surprise. "Good gracious, no, I was at the new revue at the Pavilion. Lady Gavelstroke had a box and asked me to join her party."

"Oh, yes. Good show, isn't it? I thought that sketch *The Sempiternal Triangle* very clever. Didn't you?"

"*The Sempiternal Triangle?*" wavered Mrs. Verreker-le-Flemming.

"Yes, in the first half."

"Oh! Then I didn't see it. I got there disgracefully late, I'm afraid. But then," said Mrs. Verreker-le-Flemming with pathos, "I always do seem to be late for simply everything."

Roger kept the rest of the con-

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versation resolutely upon theatres. But before he left her, he had ascertained that she had photographs of both Mrs. Beresford and Sir William Anstruther and had obtained permission to borrow them some time. As soon as she was out of view, he hailed a taxi and gave Mrs. Verreker-le-Flemming's address. He thought it better to take advantage of her permission at a time when he would not have to pay for it a second time over.

The parlor maid seemed to think there was nothing odd in his mission, and took him up to the drawing-room at once. A corner of the room was devoted to the silver-framed photographs of Mrs. Verreker-le-Flemming's friends, and there were many of them. Roger examined them with interest, and finally took away with him not two photographs but six, those of Sir William, Mrs. Beresford, Beresford, two strange males who appeared to belong to the Sir William period, and, lastly a likeness of Mrs. Verreker-le-Flemming herself. Roger liked confusing his trail.

For the rest of the day he was very busy.

His activities would have no doubt seemed to Mrs. Verreker-le-Flemming not merely baffling but pointless. He paid a visit to a public library, for instance, and consulted a work of reference, after which he took a taxi and drove to the offices of the Anglo-Eastern Perfumery Company, where he inquired for a certain Mr. Joseph Lea Hardwick and seemed much put out on hearing that no such gentleman was known to the firm and was certainly not employed in any of their branches. Many questions had to be put about the firm and its branches before he consented to abandon the quest.

After that he drove to Messrs. Weall & Wilson, the well-known institution which protects the trade interests of individuals and advises its subscribers regarding investments. Here he entered his name as a subscriber, and explaining that he had a large sum of money to invest, filled in one of the special inquiry-forms which are headed *Strictly Confidential.*

Then he went to the *Rainbow Club,* in Piccadilly.

Introducing himself to the porter without a blush as connected with Scotland Yard, he asked the man a number of questions, more or less trivial, concerning the tragedy.

"William, I understand," he said finally, as if by the way, "did not dine here the evening before?"

There it appeared that Roger was wrong. Sir William had dined in the club, as he did about three times a week.

"But I understood he wasn't here that evening?" Roger said plaintively.

The porter was emphatic. He remembered quite well. So did a waiter, whom the porter summoned to corroborate him. Sir William had dined, rather late, and had not left the diningroom till about nine o'clock. He spent the evening there, too, the waiter knew, or at least some of it, for he himself had taken him a whisky-

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and-soda in the lounge not less than half an hour later.

Roger retired.

He retired to Merton's, in a taxi.

It seemed that he wanted some new notepaper printed, of a very special kind, and to the young woman behind the counter he specified at great length and in wearisome detail exactly what he did want. The young woman handed him the books of specimen pieces and asked him to see if there was any style there which would suit him. Roger glanced through them, remarking garrulously to the young woman that he had been recommended to Merton's by a very dear friend, whose photograph he happened to have on him at that moment. Wasn't that a curious coincidence? The young woman agreed that it was.

"About a fortnight ago, I think, my friend was in here last," said Roger, producing the photograph. "Recognize this?"

The young woman took the photograph, without apparent interest.

"Oh, yes. I remember. About some notepaper, too, wasn't it? So that's your friend. Well, it's a small world. Now this is a line we're selling a good deal of just now."

Roger went back to his rooms to dine. Afterwards, feeling restless, he wandered out of the Albany and turned up Piccadilly. He wandered round the Circus, thinking hard, and paused for a moment out of habit to inspect the photographs of the new revue hung outside the Pavilion. The next thing he realized was that he had got as far as Jermyn Street and was standing outside the Imperial Theatre. Glancing at the advertisements of *The Creaking Skull*, he saw that it began at half-past eight. Glancing at his watch, he saw that the time was twenty-nine minutes past that hour. He had an evening to get through somehow. He went inside.

The next morning, very early for Roger, he called on Moresby at Scotland Yard.

"Moresby," he said without preamble, "I want you to do something for me. Can you find me a taximan who took a fare from Piccadilly Circus or its neighborhood at about ten past nine on the evening before the Beresford crime, to the Strand somewhere near the bottom of Southampton Street, and another who took a fare back between those points? I'm not sure about the first. Or one taxi might have been used for the double journey, but I doubt that. Anyhow, try to find out for me, will you?"

"What are you up to now, Mr. Sheringham?" Moresby asked suspiciously.

"Breaking down an interesting alibi," replied Roger serenely. "By the way, I know who sent those chocolates to Sir William. I'm just building up a nice structure of evidence for you. Ring up my rooms when you've got those taximen."

He strolled out, leaving Moresby positively gaping after him.

The rest of the day he spent apparently trying to buy a second-hand typewriter. He was very particular

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that it should be a Hamilton No. 4. When the shop-people tried to induce him to consider other makes he refused to look at them, saying that the Hamilton No. 4 had been so strongly recommended to him by a friend, who had bought one about three weeks ago. Perhaps it was at this very shop? No? They hadn't sold a Hamilton No. 4 for the last three months? How odd.

But at one shop they had sold a Hamilton No. 4 within the last month, and that was odder still.

At half-past four Roger got back to his rooms to await the telephone message from Moresby. At half-past five it came.

"There are fourteen taxi-drivers here, littering up my office," said Moresby offensively. "What do you want me to do with 'em?"

"Keep them till I come, Chief-Inspector," returned Roger with dignity.

The interview with the fourteen was brief enough, however. To each man in turn Roger showed a photograph, holding it so that Moresby could not see it, and asked if he could recognize his fare. The ninth man did so, without hesitation.

At a nod from Roger, Moresby dismissed them, then sat at his table and tried to look official. Roger seated himself on the table, looking most unofficial, and swung his legs. As he did so, a photograph fell unnoticed out of his pocket and fluttered, face downwards, under the table. Moresby eyed it but did not pick it up.

"And now, Mr. Sheringham, sir," he said, "perhaps you'll tell me what you've been doing?"

"Certainly, Moresby," said Roger blandly. "Your work for you. I really have solved the thing, you know. Here's your evidence." He took from his note-case an old letter and handed it to the Chief-Inspector. "Was that typed on the same machine as the forged letter from Mason's, or was it not?"

Moresby studied it for a moment, then drew the forged letter from a drawer of his table and compared the two minutely.

"Mr. Sheringham," he said soberly, "where did you get hold of this?"

"In a second-hand typewriter shop in St. Martin's Lane. The machine was sold to an unknown customer about a month ago. They identified the customer from that same photograph. As it happened, this machine had been used for a time in the office after it was repaired, to see that it was O.K., and I easily got hold of that specimen of its work."

"And where is the machine now?"

"Oh, at the bottom of the Thames, I expect," Roger smiled. "I tell you, this criminal takes no unnecessary chances. But that doesn't matter. There's your evidence."

"Humph! It's all right so far as it goes," conceded Moresby. "But what about Mason's paper?"

"That," said Roger calmly, "was extracted from Merton's book of sample notepapers, as I'd guessed

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from the very yellowed edges might be the case. I can prove contact of the criminal with the book, and there is a page which will certainly turn out to have been filled by that piece of paper."

"That's fine," Moresby said, more heartily.

"As for that taximan, the criminal had an alibi. You've heard it broken down. Between ten past nine and twenty-five past — in fact, during the time when the parcel must have been posted — the murderer took a hurried journey to that neighborhood, going probably by 'bus or Underground, but returning, as I expected, by taxi, because time would be getting short."

"And the murderer, Mr. Sheringham?"

"The person whose photograph is in my pocket," Roger said unkindly. "By the way, do you remember what I was saying the other day about Chance the Avenger, my excellent film title? Well, it's worked again. By a chance meeting in Bond Street with a silly woman I was put, by the merest accident, in possession of a piece of information which showed me then and there who had sent those chocolates addressed to Sir William. There were other possibilities, of course, and I tested them, but then and there on the pavement I saw the the whole thing, from first to last."

"Who was the murderer, then, Mr. Sheringham?" repeated Moresby.

"It was so beautifully planned," Roger went on dreamily. "We never grasped for one moment that we were making the fundamental mistake that the murderer all along intended us to make."

"And what was that?" asked Moresby.

"Why, that the plan had miscarried. That the wrong person had been killed. That was just the beauty of it. The plan had *not* miscarried. It had been brilliantly successful. The wrong person was *not* killed. Very much the right person was."

Moresby gaped.

"Why, how on earth do you make that out, sir?"

"Mrs. Beresford was the objective all the time. That's why the plot was so ingenious. Everything was anticipated. It was perfectly natural that Sir William should hand the chocolates over to Beresford. It was foreseen that we should look for the criminal among Sir William's associates and not the dead woman's. It was probably even foreseen that the crime would be considered the work of a woman!"

Moresby, unable to wait any longer, snatched up the photograph.

"Good heavens! But Mr. Sheringham, you don't mean to tell me that . . . Sir William himself!"

"He wanted to get rid of Mrs. Beresford," Roger continued. "He had liked her well enough at the beginning, no doubt, though it was her money he was after all the time.

"But the real trouble was that she was too close with her money. He wanted it, or some of it, pretty badly;

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and she wouldn't part. There's no doubt about the motive. I made a list of the firms he's interested in and got a report on them. They're all rocky, every one. He'd got through all his own money, and he had to get more.

"As for the nitrobenzine which puzzled us so much, that was simple enough. I looked it up and found that beside the uses you told me, it's used largely in perfumery. And he's got a perfumery business. The Anglo-Eastern Perfumery Company. That's how he'd know about it being poisonous, of course. But I shouldn't think he got his supply from there. He'd be cleverer than that. He probably made the stuff himself. And schoolboys know how to treat benzol with nitric acid to get nitrobenzine."

"But," stammered Moresby, "but Sir William . . . He was at Eton."

"Sir William?" said Roger sharply. "Who's talking about Sir William? I told you the photograph of the murderer was in my pocket." He whipped out the photograph in question and confronted the astounded Chief-Inspector with it. "Beresford, man! Beresford's the murderer of his own wife.

"Beresford," he went on more mildly, "who didn't want his wife but did want her money. He contrived this plot, providing as he thought against every contingency that could possibly arise. He established a mild alibi, if suspicion ever should arise, by taking his wife to the Imperial, and slipped out of the theatre at the first intermission. (I sat through the first act of the dreadful thing myself last night to see when the intermission came.) Then he hurried down to the Strand, posted his parcel, and took a taxi back. He had ten minutes, but nobody would notice if he got back to the box a minute late.

"And the rest simply followed. He knew Sir William came to the club every morning at ten thirty, as regularly as clockwork; he knew that for a psychological certainty he could get the chocolates handed over to him if he hinted for them; he knew that the police would go chasing after all sorts of false trails starting from Sir William. And as for the wrapper and the forged letter he carefully didn't destroy them because they were calculated not only to divert suspicion but actually to point away from him to some anonymous lunatic."

"Well, it's very smart of you, Mr. Sheringham," Moresby said, with a little sigh, but quite ungrudgingly. "Very smart indeed. What was it the lady told you that showed you the whole thing in a flash?"

"Why, it wasn't so much what she actually told me as what I heard between her words, so to speak. What she told me was that Mrs. Beresford knew the answer to that bet; what I deduced was that, being the sort of person she was, it was quite incredible that she should have made a bet to which she already knew the answer. *Ergo*, she didn't. *Ergo*, there never was such a bet. *Ergo*, Beresford was lying. *Ergo*, Beresford wanted to get hold of those chocolates for some rea-

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son other than he stated. After all, we only had Beresford's word for the bet, hadn't we?

"Of course he wouldn't have left her that afternoon till he'd seen her take, or somehow made her take, at least six of the chocolates — more than a lethal dose. That's why the stuff was in those meticulous six-minim doses. And so that he could take a couple himself, of course. A clever stroke, that."

Moresby rose to his feet.

"Well, Mr. Sheringham, I'm much obliged to you, sir. And now I shall have to get busy myself." He scratched his head. "Chance the Avenger, eh? Well, I can tell you one pretty big thing Beresford left to Chance the Avenger, Mr. Sheringham. Suppose Sir William hadn't handed over the chocolates after all? Supposing he'd kept 'em, to give to one of his own ladies?"

Roger positively snorted. He felt a personal pride in Beresford by this time.

"Really, Moresby! It wouldn't have had any serious results if Sir William had. Do give my man credit for being what he is. You don't imagine he sent the *poisoned* ones to Sir William, do you? Of course not! He'd send *harmless* ones, and exchange them for the others on his way home. Dash it all, he wouldn't go right out of his way to present opportunities to Chance.

"If," added Roger, "Chance really is the right word."

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Most writers of detective stories lead cloistered or ivory-towered lives. They rarely come into actual contact with crimes or criminals. The concocters of the most violent and gory murders (on paper) are usually gentle, mild-mannered people, unfamiliar with any kind of fire-arms, queasy at the sight of blood, and hardly ever owning any weapon more sinister than a letter-opener (we don't even possess that).

The point we are making is simply this: detective-story writers seldom build plots around crimes they have witnessed at first-hand. They dream up their homicides and burglaries and kidnapings out of the whole cloth of fancy and imagination.

That is why Margery Allingham's "The Lieabout" is so unusual. This story actually happened to Mrs. A. She actually met The Lieabout. It all occurred in just such an apartment, in just such a courtyard, in just such a street, in just such a section of London . . .

Margery Allingham told us so.

THE LIEABOUT

by MARGERY ALLINGHAM

I STILL have the brooch but I can hardly wear it. I thought of throwing it away once, but it is so very pretty. I don't think it is valuable but I have never dared to take it to a jeweler's to find out.

I might have sent it back to the people who owned it — in fact, I ought to have done that — but if ever it was traced to me, who would believe my story?

It was when we lived in London. We had a small flat in a courtyard leading off one of the big City thoroughfares so famous that I think perhaps I had better not mention its name. The courtyard was really only the foot of an airshaft striking down amid enormous office buildings. There were only two doors in it; one belonged to a printing plant and the other one was ours.

When you opened our door you found yourself at the foot of a flight of steep stairs, at the top of which were our three rooms.

Our domain had once been the caretaker's premises of the insurance building which was below us and still ran right through to the main street. By the time we went there it had been converted into two shops. These shops were empty when we arrived and remained so for nearly a year, although from time to time gangs of workmen were very busy in them, obliterating, we supposed, still more of the atmosphere of insurance.

There are several odd things about living in the City. One is the quiet of

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the place at night. When we moved to the country the noises of the night birds were almost too much for us after that deathly peace of London city, when the offices have closed.

Another curious thing is the surprising intimacy and friendliness of it all.

The shops where one could buy the ordinary necessities of life, as opposed to an adding machine, a battleship, or a two-thousand-guinea emerald ring, were all of the small and homely variety and were nearly all of them tucked away in courtyards like our own. The people who owned them were friendly and obliging, and told us their family histories at the slightest encouragement.

The flower women and the hawkers were other regulars who were anxious to gossip or pass the time of day, and as I walked down the crowded pavement with my shopping basket on my arm, I found I had as many people to nod to as if I were in a small-town street.

I first met The Lieabout in our own yard. He was sitting there one evening among a pile of packing cases from the printing plant when I went out to walk my dog, Addlepate. Addlepate leaped on him, mistaking him for a sack of waste-paper in which he delighted. The misapprehension led to a sort of introduction and after a while The Lieabout watched the dog to see that he did not go out into the traffic and commit suicide, and I went up to get the man some tea.

He was a frail old person with a beaky face and little bright red eyes like a ferret.

All lieabouts are necessarily dirty. Genuine tramping can never be a hygienic method of life. But he was horribly so. He looked as though he had just slipped down from his niche among the gargoyles of St. Paul's, before the cleaners could get at him.

He was glad of the tea, and when I said I had not seen him about before, he explained that he had come up from Cheapside, where he had been spending the summer. He did not ask for money and I did not offer him any, naturally. We parted friends, he to return to his packing cases in which he was making himself a temporary home, and I to my work upstairs.

He lived in the packing cases for nearly a week and we kept up a nodding acquaintance.

I was out shopping one morning when I saw the brooch. It was on a lower shelf in the window of one of those very big jewelers and silversmiths whose principal trade seems to be in challenge cups and presentation plate. The shop was not quite opposite the entrance to our courtyard but about fifty yards down the other side of the traffic. I stood for some time looking at the brooch. It consisted of seven large topazes set in oxydized silver, and the finished effect was rather like the rose window in Notre Dame.

I was still gazing at it when The Lieabout appeared at my elbow.

"Nice, ain't it?" he said. "Goin' to 'ave it?"

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I laughed and indicated my basket, which held one of Addlepate's Friday bones protruding rather disgustingly from a sea of lettuce.

"Not this week. Food's gone up," I said, and would have passed on, but the ornament had evidently attracted him too, for he came nearer to look at it and I should have had to brush past him to get into the jostling stream in the middle of the pavement again.

"It's not worf a thousand quid," he observed, after a moment or so of contemplation. "Go on in an' arsk 'em. They'll say a tenner, I betcha."

"Very likely," I said. "And then what should I do?"

He grinned at me, disclosing a most disreputable assortment of teeth.

"Same as me, I reckon," he said. "Beat it like one o'clock. 'Day, lady."

I went home and forgot all about the incident.

The next day was Saturday.

Saturday morning in the city always has a last-day-at-boarding-school atmosphere. Fewer strangers swoop out of the fat red buses or come boiling up out of the tubes, and those who do appear are definitely in holiday mood. When the big clock of St. Paul's strikes noon the exodus begins, and by a quarter to one the streets look like a theatre after the show is over.

The road outside our courtyard, which all week had been a sort of nightmare Brooklands, turned suddenly into a great river of dull glass, with only an occasional bus or taxi speeding down its wide expanse.

There were people about, of course, but only a dozen or so, and the city policemen in their enormous helmets — which they use as small personal suitcases, I believe — stood out, lonely and important, one at every third island.

It was nearly two o'clock on this particular Saturday afternoon when the police arrived. My husband leaned out of the studio window and reported that there were two large bobbies on the step. I went down to open the door. None of our visitors had left a car outside the yard gates for some considerable time, but although my conscience was clear, much clearer than it is now, I felt vaguely uneasy. One policeman may be a friend, but two are the Law.

On the step I found two of the largest, bluest specimens I have ever seen and they were both vastly uncomfortable.

I waited awkwardly for them to begin, and presently one spoke.

"I wonder if you'd do me a personal favor, ma'am?" he said.

It was such an unexpected request that I gaped at him, and he continued:

"I want you to go out into the street and look in the empty shop next door. Don't say nothing to anyone. Just behave perfectly casual, and then come back and tell us what you think you see."

I began to feel a trifle light-headed, but they were certainly real policemen.

"All right," I said stupidly. "Aren't you coming?"

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The other constable shook his head.

"No, ma'am. We don't want a crowd to collect."

I went off obediently, and as soon as I turned out of the yard I saw that any hopes my official friends might have cherished concerning the absence of a crowd were doomed to disappointment. Everyone in the street seemed to be converging on the first of the empty shops.

On the step of the shop stood my friend, The Lieabout. He was making a tremendous noise.

"It's a disgrice!" he was shouting. "A bloomin' disgrice! It's bin there five days to my knowledge. Look at it!"

I peered in through the plate glass and suddenly saw what he meant. The sight made me feel slightly sick. At the back of the shop was an archway leading into a further *salon*, which was lit by a sky-light. All kind of decorators' debris was strewn around, but among the whitewash pails, the planks, and the trestles, was something covered with an old coat and a lump of sacking. The shape was suggestive. But the thing that made it horrible was the boot. The boot stuck out from beneath the coat so naturally and yet so lifelessly.

"It's a corp!" shrieked The Lieabout, to the crowd which had just reached us. "A corp! Been there five days. The p'lice won't do nothink. It's a murder, that's wot it is!"

He turned to me.

"What you waitin' for, lady? Go tell the rozzers it's a corp."

His voice in my ear recalled me to my senses and I hurried back to my visitors. They were polite but impatient when I gave them my opinion, and it suddenly dawned upon me why I had been singled out for their confidence. A police officer is not allowed to enter private property without authority, nor do the regulations let him ask the owners of such property for permission to enter. But once he is invited in, and has a witness to prove it, he can go wherever his good sense tells him his duty demands.

"If you get out of our bedroom window onto the roof at the back of the shop, you could look down through the sky-light," I said.

They were upstairs in an instant, and I had barely time to explain to my astonished husband before they were in the bedroom negotiating the window.

It was one of those awkward old-fashioned sliding casements which permit a space about two and a half feet by one and a quarter when opened to their fullest extent.

It took a little time but out they went at last, helmets and all, and my husband with them.

However, by this time an entirely unsuspected blood-lust had taken possession of me and, unable to control my impatience, I trotted down and out into the street.

To be honest, I did not reach the street. The crowd was packed solid across our entrance, all straining and jostling to peer into the window of the shop next door.

I climbed up on the iron gate which

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closed the yard at night, and saw over the people's heads a great expanse of empty street to the east, while the west was packed solid with every vehicle which had passed that way since The Lieabout's sensational find.

It was because I was prevented by the angle of the wall from seeing my two police friends descending into the shop through the sky-light that I was an exception from the rest of the crowd, and did not have my attention diverted from the excitement over the way.

I saw the long gray car pull up outside the jeweler's shop and I saw the three men spring out of it. It was not until the crash of broken glass reached me, as the brick went through the window, that I realized anything untoward was afoot.

The rest happened so quickly that I hardly followed it. I had a confused impression of flying figures, something flashing in the autumn sun, and then of the gray car sliding round like a speedboat in the broad road and flying away with a roar of acceleration. In a moment it had gone completely. I could not even see which way it turned at the end of the street. Nothing but the ragged hole in the window, with a scared assistant's face peering through it, remained to show that the raid had occurred.

At that moment the first policeman to get down into the empty shop must have pulled away the coat, revealed the neatly arranged sacks beneath, and kicked the old boot away angrily, for the crowd suddenly became aware of the other sensation, and surged off across the road to gape anew.

It was extraordinarily neat. The whole thing had been done in one of the most important streets, without anyone being able to give a clear picture of any of the men involved.

We heard all about the robbery from the tobacconist on the corner.

Ten thousand pounds' worth of valuables had been snatched, he said, including the gold salt cellar which an ancient and worshipful company was presenting to a foreign royal bridegroom, and which had been on view there for a few privileged days. A little small stuff went, too, he said — a couple of trays of rings and several oddments.

I never saw The Lieabout again. Foolishly I supposed that, after making such an ass of himself by his false alarm, he did not care to show his face in the neighborhood.

The parcel came a week later. I found it in our mail box one night, when we came in from a show.

It was the topaz brooch. It lay upon a mat of cottonwool, and there was a note with it written in a neat, educated hand. The message was brief and only too enlightening. It ran:

Very many thanks for your valuable assistance. Very gratefully yours.

There was no signature, and the package had not been through the post.

So you see the problem: What should Mrs. A. do now?

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This month we welcome to the pages of EQMM a new French writer — that is, new to American readers. André-Paul Duchâteau makes his debut with a typically Gallic tale, charming yet ironic, in the serio-comic tradition of Maurice Leblanc — and what better patron saint of sleuthing could any contemporary French or Belgian writer make obeisances to?

M. Duchâteau was born in Tournai, Belgium, a mere twenty years ago. (Ah, these 'tec tyros of today who will be the mystery masters of tomorrow — the world is their oyster, if they but persist!) M. Duchâteau was "always crazy about detective fiction." As a child, he did not know, or dream, of Sherlock Holmes, or even the great Arsène; but he literally devoured the wonderful adventures of Iko Terouka, Japanese detective, whose exploits were then appearing in "Petit Illustré." (Indeed, it is not a small world — it is a prodigious planet; as time goes by, we realize more and more how little we have learned in forty-odd years — even about our own trade; never once in all our researches have we stumbled on the name of Iko Terouka, Japanese juggler of justice!)

At the age of sixteen M. Duchâteau wrote his first detective story — on the virginal pages of his school notebook — and believe it or not, this tale of a boys' school, called "Murder for Murder," was published in the magazine "Le Jury," edited by the famous S. A. Steeman. After so brilliant a beginning, however, M. Duchâteau found himself caught in the coils of making a living. He abandoned writing, and thought that never again would he devise a detective story. He even abandoned reading them.

But once a man has savored the detective story (we are now quoting), the taste stays with him all his life. One day not long ago M. Duchâteau saw a copy of the French edition of EQMM and purchased it out of curiosity — and he has been making up for lost time ever since. When he observed how many new and young writers are being published by EQMM, M. Duchâteau was encouraged to take up writing again. Here are the first fruits of his larcenous labors . . .

PARTNERS IN CRIME

by ANDRÉ-PAUL DUCHÂTEAU

(translated by Anthony Boucher)

THE first thing to do was to make a date with Gino. Of course I'd sooner have set up the deal with somebody else, but that would have involved certain risks. With Gino I didn't have to worry. As soon as he

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knew there was money to be made, he'd play ball.

Luckily I still had his phone number in an old notebook. At first he was surprised to recognize my voice, and in a way I could understand that. The last time we met, we hadn't parted on precisely the best terms in the world. But after a minute his voice sweetened up and he said he was delighted to be in a position to help me. We set the date for early afternoon at his place.

Since Gino made good, he'd been living like a respectable citizen on a quiet, countrified street near the Auteuil viaduct. I splurged and took a taxi to get there.

The taxi stopped right in front of the house. I was just opening the door to get out when I saw a hunched figure coming out of the house. I barely had time to jump back on the seat; I'd recognized old Frondin — the moneylender. Maybe the coincidence was funny, but I didn't feel up to smiling. Meeting Frondin was the last thing I needed just then; it was enough to have spent ten minutes on the phone the night before, listening to his creaking voice.

I had some luck; he was too concerned with his own thoughts to notice me. I waited until he turned the corner before I got out and rang the bell.

Gino opened the door himself. He hadn't changed. The same sly face, wrinkled as a crabapple.

We shook hands. Gino smiled at me cordially, and I felt the worry behind the smile. There were a half-dozen good reasons why I should hold a lethal grudge against him; and I knew the feeling was mutual.

"It feels good to see an old pal like you again, Raoul." He pushed me into an armchair. "It's been years since we've seen each other. Why didn't you let me know you're still alive at least?"

"You know how it is . . . Things are so tough now you don't have any time for what you want to do."

"Yes, we've seen better times . . . But I should complain! Thank God, I managed to tuck away a little nest-egg for my old age." He said it innocently enough, but he never took his eyes off me. He was watching to see me turn green with envy.

"I'm glad for your sake, Gino," I murmured, forcing a smile. "Still, to speak frankly, I'm a little surprised. I saw Frondin leaving as I came in. I wouldn't call that old vulture exactly a sign of prosperity. And I know what I'm talking about — to my sorrow."

"So? You too?"

The "you too" was just what I wanted. I decided to put my cards on the table. "Me too — in spades! That's just why I came to see you. After they let me out of Fresnes, I borrowed a tidy sum from him. Last night he called me up and demanded the cash. And since right now I'm in an awkward position —"

"Don't ask me to lend you money!" Gino interrupted hastily.

"Oh, no!" I protested. "Who's talking about a loan?"

"All right then." He settled back,

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reassured. Then, with a touch of glee in his voice, he added, "If I get the picture, you're at the end of your rope?"

"Very nearly. But you?"

"Oh, that's a very different matter. Frondin's after you because you haven't any money. With me, on the other hand, it's because I have too much!" He broke off to take from his pocket a crocodile cigarette-case and offer me a monogrammed cigarette. "Very aromatic mixture," he added carelessly. "I think you'll like it. Anyway, it's a change from the stuff you've been smoking. A little shop in the Rue d'Arenberg in Brussels makes them up especially for me . . . What was I saying? Oh, yes: Frondin knows I tucked away plenty of the stuff. So of course he wants his cut. He's stuck to it until he's managed to dig up just how I happened to come by this little fortune. Since then he's been blackmailing me . . ."

I leaned back more comfortably in my armchair. "So you're in a sweet mess too," I observed cheerfully.

I must say he took it well. "We'll see about that when the time comes. Meanwhile, there's not a thing in the world to keep us from enjoying one of those fine cocktails you used to mix in the old days, Raoul."

I wasn't sure whether to be annoyed or flattered, but Gino was smiling. "I've got everything here you need," he said, pointing to a portable bar. "Fix us up something special. You'll find ice in the refrigerator."

I chopped up the ice with a pick, filled two glasses, brought them back, and set to work concocting two cocktails. Gino followed my every move with interested concern.

"You haven't lost your touch," he observed, as I jiggled the shaker.

The cigarette he had given me had burned down until it was beginning to scorch my lips. At the very moment that I crushed it in an ashtray I had an idea. I took advantage of Gino's absorption in his cocktail to slip the cigarette butt into my pocket.

Gino set down his glass. For several seconds he kept his eyes closed, and when he opened them they seemed misted over with emotion.

"Blast you, Raoul," he said sweetly. "Between ourselves, you've always been a first-class heel. But all is forgiven — you know how to mix a cocktail superbly."

"Since you're feeling so well disposed toward me," I answered, picking up the cue, "I'll explain what I want from you."

He assured me that he was all ears.

"I was speaking just now of Frondin," I went on. "I told you he phoned me yesterday. He gave me a sort of ultimatum. If I haven't paid up in a week, I can expect — well, certain inconveniences . . . I don't need to dot all the i's, do I? Frondin's always had friends on the force; a phone call to the Prefecture and . . . I should be in the clear since I got out of prison only six months ago; that debt ought to be written off. But I'll bet that Frondin knows more details

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of my past than I know myself; and there are always a few items you don't like to see become police property . . . Moral: the best solution is to pay Frondin off before his deadline. But the debt runs into the hundreds and I haven't even enough on hand to pay my rent."

"Such a shame!" Gino observed.

"Don't be in such a hurry to feel sorry for me! In three days I'll be on my feet again. You see, I've lined up a job . . . I've been casing a villa at Saint-Cloud. Belongs to a silly old woman named Cecile Lerat. Her husband made a fortune in drug-store supplies, and left her a very pretty bundle. I met Cecile in a bar — Roger the Frog's. It hit me like a thunderbolt. She was wearing a cross of pearls that . . . Anyway, I took a chance and bought her a glass of champagne. Then another. By the fifth, she was weeping on my shoulder and eating out of my hand. She told me the story of her life. Including the interesting fact that she keeps her jewelry in a little desk near her bed. And here's the payoff: She spends all her weekends with friends in the country. Nobody watches the house —"

"— and then," Gino finished the sentence, "Cinderella married Prince Charming and lived happily ever after."

"Wait a minute! This is no fairy tale. At first I thought it was a trap, but I've been seeing her since then. I've checked up — there's no cop in the woodpile."

"All right. Go on."

"I've decided to pull the job Sunday. It'll be easy to sell the jewels once I've reset them. From then on it's all velvet. The only trouble is that they must know at Headquarters that I've been seeing Cecile Lerat. With my record, they're keeping an eye on me. As soon as she discovers the theft, I'll be the first suspect, and unless I have an alibi —"

"— you'll get it in the neck."

"Exactly. That's why I want your help — as a witness. I'll be pulling the job between eight and nine at night. All you have to do is tell the cops that we spent the evening together. After dinner, you can say, we went to see the new Paul Meurisse picture and didn't break up until late."

"Not a bad set-up," Gino admitted. "But it's taking a terrible risk."

"The game's worth the candle, I tell you! Of course, we're splitting fifty-fifty. And take my word for it, the Lerat jewels aren't chicken feed."

All the time I was talking, I kept an eye on Gino. The money argument hit home. But he wasn't laying down his arms right off. Just to be difficult, he kept on raising objections for another quarter of an hour. And when we finally shook hands to seal the bargain, he couldn't help saying, "You know I'm just doing it to please you." But I could see the glint in his eyes.

We spent the next half-hour working out every detail in the script. We decided it would be best, as a precau-

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tion, if Gino really did go to the pictures that night, just to forestall any trick questions. We parted as the best of friends, each of us flaunting a smile.

I whistled a bright tune to myself on the way home. That was a brilliant inspiration, tucking away that cigarette butt. I couldn't ask for a better piece of evidence. The funniest thing was that when I went to see Gino I was really playing it straight; all I wanted was his help on the alibi. Then this new idea . . . Poor Gino!

Now the plan was definitely changed: I'd break into the villa Sunday evening around eight. Cracking the little mahogany desk would be child's-play. I'd wear gloves, of course, to avoid leaving fingerprints. But I would carefully leave the butt of Gino's specially made cigarette.

With this clue, the cops would quickly trace it to the Belgian manufacturer, and from him to Gino. Meanwhile, I'd show up at the police station near me and make the following voluntary statement: My friend Gino told me his plans for stealing Mme. Lerat's jewels; at the time I consented to provide him with an alibi, but when I thought it over, my conscience bothered me and I decided to make a clean breast of it.

From then on, Gino would have a tough time getting out of the claws of the police. No use his telling the truth; nobody would believe him and all the evidence would be the other way. Since he was at the pictures, he wouldn't even have an alibi!

At last it was Sunday. I waited till it was dark, and everything went off without a hitch. At the last minute I became a little worried. Maybe Gino's old grudge would get the better of his judgment, and he would rat on me. Then there would be police waiting for me, hidden in the villa . . .

But nothing like that happened. The desk was a snap, and getting the jewels took me exactly three minutes. Before I left, I carefully dropped the cigarette on the floor.

I hid the loot in some unimproved land near my rooming house — I'd dug a hole there the night before. Now I filled in the hole and covered it with a big rock.

I went home and to bed. In ten minutes I was sleeping like a baby.

I didn't wake up until nine thirty the next morning. When I saw the rain beating against the windows, I decided to take it easy till noon.

It was about eleven, and I was dreaming of the good things to come, when I heard the heavy knocks on the door. I was out of bed in an instant, my heart beating like a fire alarm. Only the police knock like that.

I quickly slipped on a dressing gown, turned the latch, and opened the door. In the hall I could see Inspector Marin and two men in uniform, with Gino between them, handcuffed. It began to look all right.

Marin's hand was so big you could have sat on it. He pressed it against my chest, shoved me back into my room, and followed me in.

"Sit down, Raoul." He was too

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sweet and friendly. "We're going to have a nice long talk."

"I suppose it's about his alibi," I said. I kept my eyes away from Gino. "I was coming into the station this morning, Inspector. You boys were too quick for me. But I've been keeping my nose clean. I suppose he told you he was with me last night?"

"Why, no." Marin permitted himself a broad wondering grin. "What makes you think that? We found his cigarette on the scene of the crime. He was a smart boy. He's confessed everything."

I looked at Gino, who kept his eyes away. Somehow, I didn't like the whole scene.

Marin's voice was suddenly sharp. "All right, Raoul. That's out of the way. Where were you last night between eight and nine?"

"I — I don't understand," I muttered.

"I'm not asking you to understand. Just to answer me. Come on, now!"

"Well, I — I was here in my room —"

"Alone?"

"Of course. I went to bed very early and —"

"So you don't have an alibi?"

"Why should I need an alibi, Inspector?"

He sighed. "All right. If you insist on playing the village idiot, I've got a little story to tell you."

"I'd be curious to hear it." But my voice didn't come out right.

The Inspector was all sweetness again. "Just imagine," he said. "Frondin, the moneylender, was murdered last night between eight and nine. He was stabbed with an icepick, on which we found —"

My eyes flashed to Gino with sudden understanding. "My fingerprints!"

"I don't have to tell you a thing, do I?" observed the Inspector paternally. "That was your first slip, Raoul. The other was when you stole the I.O.U.'s you'd given Frondin. You didn't stop to think he'd keep a duplicate record. Funny, a smart boy like you slipping up on those two points. Because the rest of it was well planned. While you were supposed to be giving Gino an alibi for the robbery, you killed Frondin — with an icepick lifted from Gino. Gino'd have to alibi you to keep from convicting himself of the theft. Magnificent plan! Just three little slips — your two and Gino's cigarette."

I made one last try. "You've got me," I said. "I'll confess."

Marin beamed.

"To the robbery," I added quickly. "That was my job. I never went near Frondin. Gino's framed me for the murder, the dirty —"

"Of course you can prove this?" Marin asked benignly.

"Ask Gino one question. Just one. If he committed the robbery, what did he do with the jewels?"

Marin smiled. "What should he do, Raoul? He's been out of touch for so long and you still have contacts. He gave them to you to dispose of, of course."

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DEPARTMENT OF "FIRST STORIES"

John Granger's "Small Murder" is one of the eleven "first stories" which won special awards in our 1948 contest. "Small Murder" is best described as a blend of William MacHarg's O'Malley technique and semi-hardboiledism. The tale is told with the mannered restraint and deliberate understatement of the tough school. But while John Granger's style is clearly derivative, it reveals enough of John Granger himself to make us want to see more of this new author's work . . .

Mr. Granger was born thirty-three years ago, in Jersey City; he is married, has two small boys. He has worked as an insurance salesman, as an investigator, and — for one "grubby, glorious" month — as the unpaid editor of a country weekly (which shall be nameless).

The story of Mr. Granger's editorial career is too good to pass by. Hired as "advertising manager," he quickly learned — halfway through the first day — that nobody but old standbys and personal friends of the publisher ever bought advertising; he also learned, simultaneously, that the newspaper was considered a standing joke in the community.

Then, unexpectedly, the publisher (who was also the editor, pressman, and linotypist) took ill. Mr. Granger heard the Knock of Opportunity on the door. He opened the door wide, and proceeded to work nineteen hours a day as editorial writer, set-up man, and linotype operator.

The "Granger" issue came out. Hopefully our hero awaited the flood of favorable comment which would inevitably greet this notably improved journal. In four weeks there was precisely one letter, signed Old Subscriber, who wrote that the paper was not as funny as it used to be, and would the editor please go back to the old format.

Mr. Granger resigned.

Other vital statistics: John Granger has one outstanding vice — reading. He will devour anything from Anthony Trollope to Stoeger's Gun Catalog. He also has an abnormal passion for Banff (which he has never seen except in travel folders), and for Scotch whiskey and provillone.

His only previous appearances in print (except in the ill-fated country newspaper) were two "short stories" in the "Jersey Journal Junior Club" — at the age of twelve. For these Mr. Granger received $1 each. He has written ever since, but his total income from writing remained exactly $2 — until EQMM purchased his "Small Murder." In a letter to your Editors, Mr. Granger threatened that if we published "Small Murder," it would "mean a life sentence for [him] at the typewriter."

That is a fearful responsibility for your Editors to assume — but by the shade of Sherrington Hope, we'll risk it!

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SMALL MURDER

by JOHN GRANGER

"This truck broke down on Chrystie Street," McGarr said, "right after it got across the Manhattan Bridge. The driver is a guy named Davito and he had a helper with him. He left the helper to guard the truck while he went looking for a pay booth. They're not easy to find at two in the morning.

"When he got back to the truck in about half an hour, most of the furs were gone and the helper was yelling police and there was a dead man on the street."

"That's how come Homicide gets the case?" I asked.

"That's how come."

"Anything on the furs?"

McGarr gave me a sour look.

"I'm looking up a murder and you worry me about rabbit skins," he growled.

"A hundred thousand bucks worth of rabbit skins," I said. "Who's the dead guy?"

"Henny Lieber. You insurance hounds ought to know him. He did time for heisting some Bay Ridge jewelry four-five years ago. He wasn't too smart. A three-time loser. This little job would've put him away for keeps, could we prove it."

"What do they say happened?"

McGarr put his heavy mouth around a cigar, lit it, and retired behind a wall of blue smoke.

"Davito runs these trucks for an outfit over in Astoria. He don't exactly work for them, but they own the trucks and get most of the jobs and take thirty percent of the tariff. Davito gets the rest and has to pay for gas and repairs out of that. He pays his own help too.

"It's a funny set-up. Maybe they're ducking Social Security, maybe it's some kind of tax dodge. I wouldn't know. Anyway, Lieber was Davito's helper until yesterday A.M. Then they had a fight over in the yard. Nobody can tell us what it was about except Davito claims Lieber propositioned him on lifting this load of furs. Davito knocked him cold."

I interrupted. "Davito got a record?"

"Not here. Not even for dice games. But there's a few boys at the yard who might make news in the line-up. They got hired when drivers was scarce, account of the war, and nobody got around to getting rid of them.

"Well, Davito needs a helper in a hurry, so he picks up this Wilson. That's not so good. Schulman has a record all right, long as your pogo stick, mostly small stuff. A little chiseling, a little policy now and then. But no heavy larceny. And he's been a good little boy the past year, or a careful one."

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"You're a cynic with moss," I said.

"Yeah . . . Well, Davito and Wilson loaded the furs in Astoria around six last night. They came down through Greenpoint and stopped at Davito's house for a bite to eat and to put in a new battery. They had some trouble with the muffler and were working on it until after midnight. The neighbors all check on that. A couple of them complained about the electric lights they strung out from the garage and hung over the truck. They made a lot of noise too, testing the muffler."

"Any guards for the furs?"

"No. Davito had a gun and a license for it. But no guards. I suppose that makes trouble for the shipper when he tries to collect the insurance?"

"Not here. He pays the right rates. He can afford to be careless. What happened then?"

"They highballed down Atlantic Avenue and rolled over the bridge. They were going straight across Canal to the Tunnel but the muffler started acting up again, and when they got off the bridge they pulled into Chrystie. They worked a while on the muffler but didn't do much good. Finally, Davito went to phone for help, like I said, and Wilson stayed to keep an eye on the truck. Davito didn't think to leave the gun behind. In a couple minutes this delivery wagon pulled up alongside and a guy Wilson says he doesn't know gets out and asks for a match. Next thing Wilson knows, he feels something in his ribs and it ain't no cigar. There's two more citizens with guns. One is Lieber.

"They make Wilson climb into the cab of the truck, and one holds a gun on him while Lieber and his pal split the lock and start moving the furs over to the delivery wagon. All this goes on for maybe ten minutes when the boy with the gun says something to the stevedores about hurrying up. He turns his jaw just enough for Wilson to have a free kick at it. That makes Wilson a hero, the way he tells it."

"That makes Wilson a jackass. He knew we had the stuff insured."

"Yeah . . . Also he has a record. He pointed that out to me right away. 'I got a record,' he says. 'Who do you think'd believe I was clean if I just sat there and took it?' "

"Uh. He has something there."

"All right. So the lad with the gun goes down. Wilson jumps out, grabs the gun, and cuts loose. Then everybody starts shooting. Somebody starts the delivery wagon and heads north on Chrystie, fast. The one Wilson clipped swings on as it goes past. Wilson's out of bullets. He goes to the back of the truck and trips over a corpse. It's Henny Lieber. Looks like he was standing in the van when he got it, Wilson says, because there's blood on the tailboard and not much on the street."

"You giving Wilson a job on the force?" I said.

"Okay, okay. The blood was right where he said it was, still fresh enough for the lab. men to play with when

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they got there. Henny had one bullet in him, through the eye. He didn't leak too much. Wilson says he thinks he shot him but couldn't be sure. We don't think Wilson did, because there weren't no holes in Davito's truck and Wilson was shooting from up front.

"Half the neighborhood was out when the man on the beat got there. They tramped over a whole acre and messed everything up. But we found the gun that maybe killed Lieber. It wasn't far from the truck. The whole clip was gone and the muzzle smelled like the Fourth of July. Whoever dropped it was careless — maybe. Ballistics is working on it."

McGarr sat back expansively and pulled at his cigar. McGarr is not much over five-six. His height almost kept him off the force twenty years ago when they were looking for six vertical feet as proof of brains, diligence, and honesty. McGarr got in somehow, and inside of two years was working out of Centre Street.

I like Mac. He's a good cop and a straight cop. He lets the routine do all the groundwork for him. Then he uses his brains and something he calls intuition. I don't have much contact with him because most of my investigations have to do with theft or robbery, not homicide. But when I do meet up with him he doesn't try to be any cozier than he has to.

I said, "Anything else?"

"Not now. I got to find out who was with Lieber. Might be one of those boys from the yard. I got to make a few calls around. Keep in touch and I'll let you know what I can."

"Could I see Davito and Wilson?"

"Sure," McGarr said, rolling out of the chair. "We got them separated down in the interview rooms."

I saw Cal Davito first. He was a slender dark-skinned boy with curly black hair and large moist brown eyes. He had a mustache that looked pretty new. He was possibly twenty-one years old.

I told him who I was and he acted as though he wanted to cooperate. Yes, he knew the furs were insured. No, he had seen none of the hijackers. The show was over by the time he got back. He talked about Henny Lieber without restraint. Lieber had been his helper for two months. There was never any trouble until this trip. When Davito told him about the load of furs and how much they were worth, Lieber had acted funny — "thoughtful." Then, on the morning they were to load, Lieber told Davito he knew where they could get rid of the furs for more money than they would earn in a long lifetime of trucking.

Davito hit him once, knocking him out. That was all there was to that.

I wrote it out in longhand and asked him to sign it. He balked no more than usual, wanting to know if he shouldn't first talk to the shipper or the van company. But he signed.

I talked to Bart Wilson next. He was older than Davito, running a

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little to fat, with a pale face you could forget in a hurry, and not much hair any more. He sported a mustache neat and thin as a Broadway gag. It was the only neat thing about him. His clothes were mussed and he had a blue spot under one eye.

Substantially, his story was the same as I had from McGarr. But with Wilson doing the telling, it took a lot longer. I had to listen to how many times he had been framed, and how the cops never gave a gee a break, and how even on this job he had been treated more like the hijacker than the hero who risked his life to Save the Cargo.

But he gave me a statement too, making nine corrections in the wording to be sure he got all the breaks coming to him.

When I left Centre Street, there was a note for me at the desk:

"Delivery wagon found abandoned near Gracie Square. Registered to Lieber. L. bought it last week. Lab. says hairs from interior are from furs all right. Nothing doing on who was with Lieber. Don't bother me until you hear from me. McGarr."

I had some other things to go on and didn't see McGarr for a few days. When I dropped around to the squad room they told me he had just gone out on the Lieber hijacking. I found him later in one of those holes in the wall that sell malted milk and knishes.

McGarr said, "You going to be a pest about this?"

"Look," I said, "the company's paying the claim. But it would make things a lot nicer if we found the furs."

"Okay. Why don't you go look for them?"

I couldn't afford to look hurt.

"Anything new?" I asked.

"Nope. So far everything checks. We found a woman who can't sleep nights because she sleeps all day and she was up at a third-story window on Chrystie that night. The way she tells it, it's just like Wilson and Davito gave it to us except that she can't remember more than two guys doing the stickup. She thought it was just some truckmen working late, until the shooting started. Then she says the bullets were flying like mosquitoes in springtime. She remembers the delivery wagon too. She won't say it was the same one we got at Gracie Square but it looks like it.

"Other things back the boys up. A barkeep over on Third Avenue remembers Davito even from a photo. He remembers Davito coming in around two that morning and asking for some nickels. He dialed some number and there was a lot of jabber about a truck breaking down and a mechanic being needed. Then Davito came over and had a beer. He didn't talk much, and soon he left. A couple of barflies were hanging around too, but they ain't much good for witnesses."

"Only you can't find out who was with Lieber," I said.

McGarr eyed me somberly.

"Only," he said, "we can't find out who was with Lieber."

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"You got anything else?"

"Nah," McGarr said. "What about you? You find any furs?"

I took a while answering. "Nah," I said.

"What do they pay you for anyway?" McGarr growled.

"To keep in with cops."

He bought a quarter's worth of that and said, "Over in Davito's neighborhood an old lady who runs a candy store saw Lieber hanging around that afternoon. She says she doesn't want to get involved. But she'll admit he was there from four until after seven, when Wilson and Davito arrived. Lieber parked that light wagon of his over by a vacant lot nearby, and this old lady can't remember seeing him go near Davito's truck. But that don't mean nothing. She had customers to wait on. She didn't spend all her time looking after Henny Lieber. All we can be sure of is Henny was out there."

"Casing the place," I suggested. McGarr gave me his cold survey.

"If you have to talk like that," he said, "it's all right with me. Did I tell you that gun we found belonged to Lieber?"

"You didn't tell me. But it's nice to know. Any fingerprints?"

"Wait'll I finish. It was also the gun that killed Lieber."

"What does that mean?"

"We don't know yet. There were prints all right but they were too smudged to do us any good."

I looked very thoughtful. "Lieber, shot with his own gun."

"Don't get exercised over that," McGarr grumbled. "Could be he lent it to one of the boys helping him. Could be he was shot by accident, or maybe on purpose."

"Could be," I said. "What do you do next?"

"*I* do some more looking," McGarr said. "*You* pay for that stuff and get out of my sight. I'll give you a ring some day."

Three days later McGarr gave me that ring. I was out of the office when the call came and got it an hour late. I made it from Maiden Lane to Centre Street, through bad traffic, in fourteen minutes. McGarr and three more men in plainclothes were just coming down the steps.

"I got your call," I said.

McGarr stopped, waving the others on, and said to me:

"We're going out to close a case."

"Not the fur deal?"

"Natch!" he said, grinning.

"Mind if I tag along?"

"Come on. You can make like you're one of the boys."

We went across town with the siren open.

"It's that hot?" I asked.

"Nuts," said McGarr, "Clancy just likes to ride that thing. It makes him feel like a cop."

We weaved up the West Side Highway, Clancy making the most of his opportunity.

At Ninety-sixth Street we left the elevated highway and picked our way a few more blocks uptown.

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Clancy pulled into a street full of brownstones that had once been High Barbary and were now just low life. He stopped the car before a house with a scabby stoop.

McGarr said: "Clancy, you and Miller take the fire escape in the back. Belkin and I'll go up the stairs. You" — to me — "stay behind us."

He gave Clancy and Miller time to get through the alley to the backyard. We went up the stoop.

The outside door was old and scarred but it had a new lock. McGarr produced a key and the door swung inward on quiet hinges. The key was a surprise, but this was no time for questions.

We were in a dank and gloomy hall. McGarr gestured for us to keep to the edges of the treads. We went up silently, in single file. Somewhere before the first landing McGarr and Belkin got out their guns.

McGarr had three steps to go when a door at the head of the stairs opened. McGarr lunged upward. Cal Davito yelled something in a hoarse voice and slammed the door in McGarr's face. Two hundred pounds hit the door at the same time. The weight advantage was all on McGarr's side. Davito went down under the door.

Wilson was halfway out the window when Belkin, leaping over the tangle, caught him by the trousers belt and yanked. I made the stairhead in time to see Wilson land in a sitting position on the floor. His pale bald head glistened with sweat. His dark eyes were bleak and furious. His hand slipped toward a rear pocket. Belkin, grinning, slapped him across the chops with his gun, and Wilson lay down. Belkin clipped the cuffs on him.

McGarr had jerked Davito to his feet and was handcuffing him. Davito's brown eyes were still soft and wide with innocence, and his mustache still looked new. But he seemed much older. He said:

"What's this all about, Officer?"

"Stop it," McGarr growled. "You're under arrest. Murder. For the murder of Henny Lieber."

Wilson, on the floor, came to and groaned.

"Yeah," said McGarr, and turning to me he went on, "Your rabbit skins will be upstairs, most of them. They got a roomful, so I'm told."

I finished my report on a police stenographer's typewriter, sent it by messenger to Maiden Lane, and we went out for a bite.

"I been dumb," McGarr said, shaking his head. "They put on a show for me and I almost paid for the tickets."

"I don't see that," I said.

"Sure. I wasted a lot of time looking up Lieber's friends because it was Lieber's car. We scared a lot of them and we turned up two burglaries and a case of bigamy, but nothing that looked like the fur job. Everything backed up Wilson's story. But one thing had me worried — all that shooting and no holes in Davito's truck. I guess I was half thinking that from the start — how it smelled a

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little like a staged riot — but I kept wasting all that time on Lieber's friends. I must be getting old."

"You are," I said cheerfully. "What finally got you thinking about this pair?"

"Wilson has a record. The social workers can cry in their tea all they like, but when I see a guy with a two-page record I want to know what for. When I got around to looking it up in the B.C.I., I found one of Wilson's arrests was in '39, for working the protection racket. And that time his pal who got arrested with him was a joe named Crivit.

"We wouldn't bother with anything as far back as that but this truck with no bullet holes had me thinking. We went to see Crivit and he wasn't nothing much. We asked just a few questions and he folded. He figured Davito and Wilson would probably get to him anyway, and I guess he thought he'd be safer in jail."

"Was he in it from the beginning?"

"No. They called him in when Lieber wouldn't go along. Not that Lieber was too fussy, but being a three-time loser on parole he couldn't take chances. Davito got sore and socked him.

"Lieber had to come back for more. He hangs around Davito's place all afternoon and half the night. Trying to screw up courage, I guess. Finally he braces Davito and somewhere along the line starts waving his gun around. We don't know exactly what he was after. Crivit says he was threatening to go to the cops."

"Crivit spill all this?"

"Sure. Crivit's got a backbone full of soft cheese. Davito says different. Davito says Lieber tried to kill him and he took the gun away and shot Lieber. Wilson goes along with Davito."

"They both talked?"

"Yeah, they'll cop pleas if the judge'll let them. Crivit says they sweet-talked Lieber into the truck to show him the furs, and Davito shot him there. The racket with the muffler drowned out the shooting."

"What about Lieber's truck?"

"That's where Davito got cute. They took the keys off Lieber. They let Crivit — because no one around here knows him — drive Lieber's wagon. In Chrystie Street, where it's nice and quiet that hour of the morning, they stop, put on a little window dressing for whoever might be watching, and switch most of the furs to Lieber's wagon. Then Crivit drives off with the stuff while Wilson shoves Lieber's body out onto the pavement and puts on the fireworks display. All the bullets went into dirt in the parkway."

"They had an alibi and a ready-made suspect," I put in.

"Nuts," McGarr said. "Just another small murder, and a dumb one. The beauty part of it is I might not have caught on when I did if Davito wasn't so cheap."

"How's that?"

"He wouldn't let Wilson put any bullets through the truck, account of he was liable for any repairs."

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THE BEST MYSTERIES OF THE MONTH

by ANTHONY BOUCHER

Recommended to all murder fanciers:

Cyril Hare's THE WIND BLOWS DEATH (Little, Brown)

To date much better known in England than America, Hare proves his claim to topflight rank with a perfect blend of deductive puzzlement and satiric commentary on amateur symphonic societies. Reminiscent of what John Strachey calls the Golden Age of Allingham, Blake, and Sayers, this witty and perceptive volume should start a drive to flush out of their transatlantic warrens the many Hares not yet published here.

Erle Stanley Gardner's THE CASE OF THE NEGLIGENT NYMPH (Morrow)

The Old Master may turn out too many quickies; but when he hits his top stride, he's hard to beat. He's done it again here, with all the legal intricacies and courtroom fireworks you could ask — plus an occasional sharp bite to the writing which suggests the collaboration of his alter ego, A. A. Fair.

Frank Bunce's SO YOUNG A BODY (Simon & Schuster)

The Inner Sanctum holds up its record for finding first-rate first novels with this blithe yarn of a murderous ocean voyage, familiar enough in its material but enlivened by deft plotting and a fresh humorous approach.

A. B. Cunningham's THE HUNTER IS THE HUNTED (Dutton)

A backwoods murder case presents little mystery but great suspense, as Sheriff Jess Roden works as pseudonymous undercover man for the F. B. I. The regional atmosphere is so vivid, the case itself so uniquely suited to Roden's talents, that this book may well represent Cunningham on any future checklist of detective novels.

Dorothy Salisbury Davis's THE CLAY HAND (Scribner's)

The author of one of 1949's best first novels, THE JUDAS CAT, explores drabness and terror in a West Virginia coal-mining town. A trifle heavy in spots, but has a compelling atmospheric realism suggestive of Cunningham.

Frances and Richard Lockridge's THE DISHONEST MURDERER (Lippincott)

An odd Mr. and Mrs. North item, in that the emphasis is less on humor than on what one might call a rational Eberhartian romance; but an effective book, notable for the deepening characterization of the Norths themselves.

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James Benét's THE KNIFE BEHIND YOU (Harper)

Another of last year's debutants more than fulfills his promise with a sharp and bitter picture, sketched with objective economy, of the dog-eat-dog life behind the scenes of a large department store.

Anthony Gilbert's DEATH KNOCKS THREE TIMES (Random)

The magnificent Arthur Crook is less in evidence than his fans may wish; but his creator is in fine form depicting an unusually memorable murderer and an English family group so pettily vicious as to make Lillian Hellman's Hubbard family seem a picture of domestic bliss.

Roger Bax's TWO IF BY SEA (Harper)

Far removed from Bax's earlier ironic chronicles of murder, this story of the rescue by staunch Britishers of their Russian wives is the most uneventful "novel of adventure and suspense" since Erskine Childers's THE RIDDLE OF THE SANDS (1903), which it much resembles both in its preoccupation with the details of navigation, and in its sincere and unpretentious charm.

The above are cheerfully recommended to all comers. For those more concentrated readers who simply cannot get enough of their particular specialty, the following may do nicely:

SHORT STORIES: Agatha Christie's THREE BLIND MICE AND OTHER STORIES (Dodd, Mead)

Includes eight admirable Christie shorts, six of them previously reprinted in *EQMM* and in Queen anthologies. (The title novelette, however, reads like a singularly malicious parody-pastiche of Christie.)

HARDBOILED: Frank Kane's SLAY RIDE (Washburn)

A standard routine toughie which manages to be less sadistic and more readable than many.

STOLID BRITISH: John Rhode's DOUBLE IDENTITIES (Dodd, Mead)

Dr. Priestley at it again (and this time largely by guesswork) in a slow but well-intricated intrigue of murder and impersonation.

PUZZLE GIMMICKS: MYSTERY PUZZLE OF THE MONTH (Pearl)

Represents the most satisfactory of the various attempts to date to fuse the jigsaw puzzle and the detective story — partly because the jigsaws are trickier than most inexpensive ones, but chiefly because the accompanying stories are plotted and written by writers as familiar to *EQMM* readers as Brett Halliday, Helen McCloy, Clayton Rawson, and Kelley Roos.

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SWEET ARE THE USES OF PUBLICITY . . .

For nearly ten years now it has been our editorial policy to give you an equal balance of new stories and old. The new stories are the finest original tales of crime and detection being written today — see your Editors' Fifth Annual Report on EQMM's Prize Contests, at the beginning of this issue. The old stories are not the usual type of reprints. We try to bring you not only ratiocinative roast beef but criminous caviar — especially those obscure little classics, those unaccountably forgotten gems, those unknown little masterpieces which can be found only in rare or unavailable books. Of course, there are occasional exceptions to this golden rule — but only for special reasons. Graham Greene's "The Third Man" is such an exception — but again there is a special reason.

"The Third Man" was first published just a little more than a year ago, in "The American Magazine." Very seldom do we reprint a story only a single year after its initial appearance, or for that matter within two or three years. But as you read these words, you have probably guessed the reason why "The Third Man" is an exceptional story.

The movie version of "The Third Man" is now showing all over the United States. At the time of this writing it is scheduled to be premiered on February 2, at the Victoria Theatre in New York. The advance ballyhoo for the picture is, to use two of Hollywood's favorite adjectives, terrific and colossal. It was produced and directed by Carol Reed, presented by Alexander Korda and David O. Selznick, with an original screenplay by Graham Greene himself, and with a superb cast including Joseph Cotten, Valli, Orson Welles, and Trevor Howard. By this time you know — or should know — that the musical score of the movie is unique: the only background music is that played on a single zither, the music composed and rendered by Anton Karis. Mr. Karis was discovered by Orson Welles and Carol Reed in a little music hall in Vienna, and his music has already become the rage of London and Paris. By the time this issue of EQMM reaches you, all America will probably be in a dither about Karis' zither. Guy Lombardo was one of the first to record the music behind "The Third Man," and even before the motion picture was officially released, Arthur Murray had created two new dances — the Zither Polka and the Zither Waltz. Ah, ballyhoo and bandwagon in this home of the brave and land of the free!

Anyway, here is the story that started the whole fantastic merry-go-round, and as an exception to our general rule we publish it as hard on the heels of the movie premiere as our schedules would permit. You might say that makes us accessories after the fact . . .

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Graham Greene is surely one of the most gifted of contemporary English writers. You remember him, in the detective-mystery field, for his so-called "entertainments" — THIS GUN FOR HIRE, THE CONFIDENTIAL AGENT, THE MINISTRY OF FEAR, *and the "grimly fascinating"* BRIGHTON ROCK.

THE THIRD MAN

by GRAHAM GREENE

WHEN I saw Rollo Martins first I made this note on him for my security police files: "In normal circumstances a cheerful fool. Drinks too much and may cause a little trouble. Has never really grown up, and perhaps that accounts for the way he worshipped Lime."

I met him first at Harry Lime's funeral. It was February, and the gravediggers had been forced to use electric drills to open the frozen ground in Vienna's Central Cemetery. It was as if even nature were doing its best to reject Lime, but we got him in at last and laid the earth back on him like bricks. He was vaulted in, and Rollo Martins walked quickly away as though his long, gangly legs wanted to break into a run, and the tears of a boy ran down his thirty-five-year-old cheeks. Rollo Martins believed in friendship, and that was why what happened later was such a shock.

If you are to understand this strange, rather sad story you must have an impression, at least, of the background — the smashed, dreary city of Vienna divided up in zones among the four powers: the Russian, the British, the American, the French zones, regions marked only by a notice board, and in the center of the city, surrounded by the Ring, with its heavy public buildings and its prancing statuary, the Inner Stadt under the control of all four powers.

In this once fashionable Inner Stadt, each power in turn, for a month at a time, takes, as we call it, "the chair," and becomes responsible for security. At night, if you were fool enough to waste your Austrian shillings on a night club, you would see the International Patrol at work — four military police, one from each power, communicating with one another, if they communicated at all, in the language of their enemy.

I never knew Vienna between the wars, and I am too young to remember the old Vienna, with its Strauss music and its bogus easy charm. To me, it is simply a city of undignified ruins which turned, that February, into great glaciers of snow and ice. The Danube was a gray, flat, muddy river a long way off across the Russian zone. The Prater lay smashed and desolate and full of weeds; only the

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Great Wheel moved, revolving slowly over the foundations of merry-go-rounds like abandoned milestones, the rusting iron of smashed tanks which nobody had cleared away, the frost-nipped weeds where the snow was thin.

At night, the kidnapings occur — such senseless kidnapings they sometimes seemed to us — a Ukrainian girl without a passport, an old man beyond the age of usefulness, sometimes, of course, the technician or the traitor. This was, roughly, the Vienna to which Rollo Martins had come on February 7 of last year.

A British subject can still travel if he is content to take with him only five English pounds, which he is forbidden to spend abroad, but if Rollo Martins had not received an invitation from Lime of the International Refugee Office he would not have been allowed to enter Austria, which counts still as occupied territory. Lime had suggested that Martins might "write up" the business of looking after the international refugees, and although it wasn't Martins's usual line, he had consented.

Rollo Martins's usual line was the writing of paper-covered Westerns under the name of Buck Dexter. His public was large but unremunerative. He couldn't have afforded Vienna if Lime had not offered to pay his expenses when he got there out of some vaguely described propaganda fund. He could also, he said, keep him supplied with paper *Bafs* — the only currency in use from a penny upward in British hotels and clubs. So it was with exactly five unusable pound notes that Martins arrived in Vienna.

An odd incident had occurred at Frankfurt, where the plane from London grounded for an hour. Martins was eating a hamburger in the American canteen (a kindly air line supplied the passengers with a voucher for 65 cents' worth of food) when a man he could recognize from twenty feet away as a journalist approached.

"You Mr. Dexter?" he asked.

"Yes," Martins said, taken off his guard.

"You look younger than your photographs," the man said. "Like to make a statement? I represent the local paper here. We'd like to know what you think of Frankfurt."

"I only touched down ten minutes ago."

"Fair enough," the man said. "What about views on the American novel?"

"I don't read them," Martins said.

"The well-known acid humor," the journalist said. He pointed at a small, gray-haired man with two protruding teeth, nibbling a bit of bread. "Happen to know if that's Carey?"

"No. What Carey?"

"J. G. Carey, of course."

"I've never heard of him."

"You novelists live out of the world. He's my real assignment." And Martins watched the journalist make across the room for the great Carey.

Dexter wasn't the man's assignment, but Martins couldn't help feeling a certain pride — nobody had

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ever before referred to him as a novelist; and that sense of pride and importance carried him over the disappointment when Lime was not there to meet him at the airport, nor at the Hotel Astoria, where the bus landed him, and no message — only a cryptic one for Mr. Dexter from someone he had never heard of called Crabbin: "We expected you on tomorrow's plane. Please stay where you are. On the way round. Hotel room booked." But Rollo Martins wasn't the kind of man who stayed around.

Martins had been given Lime's address, and he felt no curiosity about the man called Crabbin. It was too obvious that a mistake had been made, though he didn't yet connect it with the conversation at Frankfurt. Lime had written that he could put Martins up in his own flat, a large apartment on the edge of Vienna, so Martins drove straightaway to the building lying in the third (British) zone.

How quickly one becomes aware of silence even in so silent a city as Vienna, with the snow steadily settling. Martins hadn't reached the second floor before he was convinced that he would not find Lime there, and as he reached the fourth floor and saw the big, black bow over the door handle, he knew he would not find Lime anywhere in the world. Of course, it might have been a cook who had died, a housekeeper, anybody but Harry Lime, but Martins knew that Lime, the Lime he had hero-worshipped now for twenty years, since the first meeting in a grim school corridor with a cracked bell ringing for prayers, was gone.

After he had rung the doorbell half a dozen times, a small man with a sullen expression put his head out from another flat and told him in a tone of vexation, "It's no use ringing like that. There's nobody there. He's dead."

Martins, as he told me later, asked him, "When did it happen? How?"

"He was run over by a car," the man said. "Last Thursday." He added sullenly, as if really this were none of his business, "They are burying him this afternoon. You've only just missed a couple of friends and the coffin."

"Wasn't he in a hospital?"

"There was no sense in taking him to a hospital. He was killed here on his own doorstep — instantaneously."

"Where are they burying him?"

"In the Central Cemetery."

He had no idea how to pay for his taxi, or indeed where in Vienna he could find a room in which he could live for five English pounds, but that problem had to be postponed until he had seen the last of Harry Lime. He drove straight to Central Cemetery.

It was just chance that he found the funeral in time — one patch in the enormous park where the snow had been shoveled aside and a tiny group were gathered, apparently bent on some very private business. A priest had finished speaking, and a coffin was on the point of being lowered into the

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ground. Two men in lounge suits were at the graveside. A girl stood a little way away with her hands over her face, and I stood twenty yards away by another grave watching with relief the last of Lime and noticing carefully who was there — just a man in a mackintosh, I was to Martins. He came up to me and said, "Could you tell me who they are burying?"

"A fellow called Lime," I said, and was astonished to see the tears start to this stranger's eyes. He didn't look like a man who wept, nor was Lime the kind of man who I thought was likely to have mourners.

Martins stood there, till the end, close beside me. He said to me later that as an old friend he didn't want to intrude on these newer ones. As soon as the affair was over, Martins strode back to his taxi; he made no attempt to speak to anyone, and the tears now were really running. I followed him. I knew the other three; I wanted to know the stranger.

I caught him up by his taxi and said, "I haven't any transport. Would you give me a lift into town?"

"Of course," he said. I knew the driver of my jeep would spot me as we came out and follow us.

I said, "My name's Calloway."

"Martins," he said.

"You were a friend of Lime?"

"Yes." Most people in the last week would have hesitated before they admitted quite so much. "I came only this afternoon from England. Harry had asked me to stay with him. I hadn't heard."

"Bit of a shock?"

"Look here," he said; "I badly want a drink, but I haven't any cash — except five pounds sterling. I'd be awfully grateful if you'd stand me one."

It was my turn to say, "Of course." I thought for a moment, and told the driver the name of a small bar in the Kärtnerstrasse.

On the door was the usual notice saying the bar opened at 6 till 10, but one just pushed the door and walked through the front rooms. We had a whole small room to ourselves.

Martins said over his second quick drink, "I'm sorry, but he was the best friend I ever had."

I couldn't resist saying, knowing what I knew, and because I was anxious to vex him — one learns a lot that way — "That sounds like a cheap novelette."

He said quickly, "I write cheap novelettes."

I said, "Tell me about yourself — and Lime."

"Look here," he said; "I badly need another drink, but I can't keep scrounging on a stranger. Could you change me a pound or two into Austrian money?"

"Don't bother about that," I said, and called the waiter. "You can treat me when I come to London on leave. You were going to tell me about Lime and how you met him?"

The glass of liqueur might have been a crystal the way he looked at it and turned it this way and that. He said, "It was a long time ago. I don't

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suppose anyone knows Harry the way I do." And I thought of the thick file of agents' reports in my office, each claiming the same thing.

"How long?"

"Twenty years — or a bit more. I met him my first term at school. I can see the place. I can see the notice-board and what was on it. I can hear the bell ringing. He was a year older and knew the ropes. He put me wise to a lot of things."

"Was he clever at school?"

"Not the way they wanted him to be. But what things he did think up! He was a wonderful planner. I was far better at subjects like History and English than Harry, but I was a hopeless mug when it came to carrying out his plans." He laughed; he was already beginning, with the help of drink and talk, to throw off the shock of the death. He said, "I was always the one who got caught."

"That was convenient for Lime."

"That was my fault, not his. He could have found someone cleverer if he'd chosen, but he liked me. He was endlessly patient with me."

"When did you see him last?"

"Oh, he was over in London six months ago for a medical congress. You know, he qualified as a doctor, though he never practiced. That was typical of Harry. He just wanted to see if he could do a thing, and then he lost interest. But he used to say that it often came in handy."

And that, too, was true. It was odd how like the Lime he knew was to the Lime I knew; it was only that he looked at Lime's image from a different angle or in a different light.

He said, "One of the things I liked about Harry was his humor." He gave a grin which took five years off his age. "I'm a buffoon. I like playing the silly fool, but Harry had real wit. You know, he could have been a first-class light composer if he had worked at it."

He whistled a tune — it was oddly familiar to me. "I always remember that. I saw Harry write it. Just in a couple of minutes on the back of an envelope. That was what he always whistled when he had something on his mind. It was his signature tune."

He whistled the tune a second time, and I knew then who had written it — of course, it wasn't Harry. I nearly told him so, but what was the point?

The tune wavered and went out. He stared down into his glass, drained what was left, and said, "It's a damned shame to think of him dying the way he did."

"It was the best thing that ever happened to him," I said.

"You mean there wasn't any pain?"

"He was lucky in that way, too."

It was my tone of voice and not my words that caught Martins's attention. He asked gently and dangerously — I could see his right hand tighten — "Are you hinting at something?"

There is no point at all in showing physical courage in all situations; I eased my chair far enough back to be out of reach of his fist. I said, "I mean that I had his case completed at police

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headquarters. He would have served a long spell — a very long spell — if it hadn't been for the accident."

"What for?"

"He was about the worst racketeer who ever made a dirty living in this city."

I could see him measuring the distance between us and deciding that he couldn't reach me from where he sat.

"You're a policeman?" he asked.

"Yes."

"I've always hated policemen. They are always either crooked or stupid."

"Is that the kind of books you write?"

I could see him edging his chair round to block my way out. I caught the waiter's eye, and he knew what I meant — there's an advantage in always using the same bar for interviews.

Martins said gently, and brought out a surface smile: "I have to call them sheriffs."

"Been in America?"

"Is this an interrogation?"

"Just interest."

"Because if Harry was that kind of racketeer, I must be one, too. We always worked together."

"I daresay he meant to cut you in — somewhere in the organization. I wouldn't be surprised if he had meant to give you the baby to hold. That was his method at school — you told me, didn't you?"

"You are running true to form, aren't you? I suppose there was some petty racket going on with petrol and you couldn't pin it on anyone, so you've picked a dead man. That's just like a policeman. You're a real policeman, I suppose?"

"Yes, Scotland Yard, but they've put me into a colonel's uniform when I'm on duty."

He was between me and the door now. I couldn't get away from the table without coming into range. I'm no fighter, and he had six inches of advantage anyway. I said, "It wasn't petrol."

"Tires, saccharins . . . why don't you policemen catch a few murderers for a change?"

"Well, you could say that murder was part of his racket."

He pushed the table over with one hand and made a dive at me with the other. The drink confused his calculations. Before he could try again my driver had his arms round him.

"Listen, Callaghan, or whatever your bloody name is —"

"Calloway. I'm English, not Irish."

"I'm going to make you look the biggest bloody fool in Vienna."

"I see. You're going to find me the real criminal?"

"You can let me go, Callaghan. I'd rather make you look the fool you are than black your eye. You'd only have to go to bed for a few days with a black eye. But when I've finished with you, you'll leave Vienna."

I took out a couple of pounds' worth of *Bafs* and stuck them in his breast pocket. "These will see you through tonight," I said, "and I'll make sure they keep a seat for you on tomorrow's London plane."

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"You can't turn me out. My papers are in order."

"Yes, but this is like other cities: You need money here. If you change sterling on the black market I'll catch up on you inside twenty-four hours. . . . Let him go."

Rollo Martins dusted himself down. "I'll be seeing you again when I've got the dope," he said.

"I might come and see you off tomorrow," I said.

"I shouldn't waste your time. I won't be there."

"Paine, here, will show you the way to Sacher's. You can get a bed and dinner there. I'll see to that."

He stepped to one side as though to make way for the waiter, and slashed out at me. I just avoided him but stumbled against the table. Before he could try again, Paine had landed him on the mouth. He went bang over in the alleyway between the tables and came up bleeding from a cut lip.

I had had a long day and I was tired of Rollo Martins. I said to Paine, "See him safely into Sacher's. Don't hit him again if he behaves."

What happened next I didn't hear from Paine, but from Martins a long time afterward. Paine simply saw him to the head porter's desk and explained there, "This gentleman came in on the plane from London. Colonel Calloway says he's to have a room." Having made that clear, he said, "Good evening, sir," and left.

"Had you already got a reservation, sir?" the porter asked.

"No. No, I don't think so," Martins said in a muffled voice, holding his handkerchief to his mouth.

"I thought perhaps you might be Mr. Dexter. We had a room reserved for a week for Mr. Dexter."

Martins said, "Oh, I am Mr. Dexter." He told me later that it occurred to him that Lime might have engaged him a room in that name because perhaps it was Buck Dexter and not Rollo Martins who was to be used for propaganda purposes.

A voice said at his elbow, "I'm so sorry you were not met at the plane, Mr. Dexter. My name's Crabbin."

The speaker was a stout, middle-aged young man with one of the thickest pairs of horn-rimmed glasses that Martins had ever seen. He went apologetically on, "One of our chaps happened to ring up Frankfurt and heard you were on the plane. H. Q. made one of their usual foolish mistakes and wired you were not coming. Something about Sweden, but the cable was badly mutilated. Directly I heard from Frankfurt I tried to meet the plane, but I just missed you. You got my note?"

Martins held his handkerchief to his mouth and said obscurely, "Yes. Yes?"

"May I say at once, Mr. Dexter, how excited I am to meet you?"

"Good of you."

"Ever since I was a boy, I've thought you the greatest novelist of our century."

Martins winced; it was painful opening his mouth to protest. He

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took an angry look instead at Mr. Crabbin, but it was impossible to suspect that young man of a practical joke.

"You have a big Austrian public, Mr. Dexter, both for your originals and your translations. Especially for *The Curved Prow;* that's my own favorite."

Martins was thinking hard. "Did you say — room for a week?"

"Yes."

"Very kind of you."

"Mr. Schmidt, here, will give you tickets every day, to cover all meals. But I expect you'll need a little pocket money. We'll fix that. Tomorrow we thought you'd like a quiet day — to look about."

"Yes."

"Of course, any of us are at your service if you need a guide. Then, the day after tomorrow in the evening there's a little quiet discussion at the Institute — on the contemporary novel. We thought perhaps you'd say a few words."

Martins at that moment was prepared to agree to anything, to get rid of Mr. Crabbin and also to secure a week's free board and lodging. He said, "Of course, of course," into his handkerchief.

"Excuse me, Mr. Dexter, have you got a toothache?"

"No. Somebody hit me, that's all."

"Good heavens! Were they trying to rob you?"

"No, it was a soldier. I was trying to punch his colonel in the eye."

He removed the handkerchief and gave Crabbin a view of his cut mouth. He told me that Crabbin was at a complete loss for words; Martins couldn't understand why, because he had never read the work of his great contemporary, Benjamin Dexter; he hadn't even heard of him. I am a great admirer of Dexter, so that I could understand Crabbin's bewilderment.

Dexter has been ranked as a stylist with Henry James, but he has a wider feminine streak than his master — indeed, his enemies have sometimes described his subtle, complex, wavering style as old-maidish. For a man still just on the right side of 50, his passionate interest in embroidery and his habit of calming a not very tumultuous mind with tatting — a trait beloved by his disciples — certainly to others seems a little affected.

"Have you ever read a book called *The Lone Rider to Santa Fe?*" Martins asked.

"No, I don't think so."

Martins said, "This lone rider had his best friend shot by the sheriff of a town called Lost Claim Gulch. The story is how he hunted that sheriff down — quite legally — until his revenge was completed."

"I never imagined you reading Westerns, Mr. Dexter," Crabbin said.

"Well, I'm gunning just the same way for Colonel Callaghan."

"Never heard of him."

"Heard of Harry Lime?"

"Yes," Crabbin said cautiously, "but I didn't really know him. A friend of his — an actress, you know — is learning English at the Institute.

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He called once or twice to fetch her."

Martins remembered the girl by the grave with her hands over her face. He said, "I'd like to meet any friend of Harry's."

"She'll probably be at your lecture."

"Austrian?"

"She claims to be Austrian, but I suspect she's Hungarian. She works at the Josefstadt."

"Why claims to be Austrian?"

"The Russians sometimes get interested in the Hungarians. I wouldn't be surprised if Lime had not helped her with her papers. She calls herself Schmidt. Anna Schmidt."

Martins felt he had got all he could from Crabbin, so he pleaded tiredness, a long day, promised to ring up in the morning, accepted ten pounds' worth of *Bafs* for immediate expenses, and went to his room.

He was tired. He realized that when he stretched himself out on his bed in his boots. Within a minute he was asleep. He woke suddenly, to hear the telephone ringing by his bed.

A voice with a trace of foreign accent — only a trace — said, "Is that Mr. Rollo Martins?"

"Yes."

"You wouldn't know me," the voice said unnecessarily, "but I was a friend of Harry Lime."

It was a change, too, to hear anyone claim to be a friend of Harry's; Martins's heart warmed toward the stranger. He said, "I'd be glad to meet you."

"I'm just around the corner at the Old Vienna."

"Wouldn't you make it tomorrow?"

"Harry asked me to see that you were all right. I was with him when he died."

"I thought —" Rollo Martins said, and stopped. He was going to say, "I thought he died instantaneously," but something suggested caution. He said, instead, "You haven't told me your name."

"Kurtz," the voice said, "I'd offer to come round to you, only, you know, Austrians aren't allowed in Sacher's."

"Perhaps we could meet at the Old Vienna in the morning."

"Certainly," the voice said, "if you are quite sure that you are all right till then."

"How do you mean?"

"Harry had it on his mind that you'd be penniless." Rollo Martins lay back on his bed with the receiver to his ear and thought, "Come to Vienna to make money." This was the third stranger to stake him in less than five hours. He said cautiously, "Oh, I can carry on till I see you."

"Shall we say eleven, then, at Old Vienna in the Kärtnerstrasse? I'll be in a brown suit and I'll carry one of your books."

"That's fine. How did you get hold of one?"

"Harry gave it to me."

The voice had enormous charm and reasonableness, but when Martins had said good night and rung off, he

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couldn't help wondering how it was that if Harry had been so conscious before he died, he had not had a cable sent to stop him. Hadn't Callaghan, too, said that Lime had died instantaneously — or without pain, was it? Or had he, himself, put the words into Callaghan's mouth?

It was then that the idea first lodged firmly in Martins's mind that there was something wrong about Lime's death, something the police had been too stupid to discover. He tried to discover it himself with the help of two cigarettes, but he fell asleep without his dinner and with the mystery still unsolved.

"What I disliked about him at first sight," Martins told me, "was his toupee. It was one of those obvious toupees — flat and yellow, with the hair cut straight at the back and not fitting close. There *must* be something phony about a man who won't accept baldness gracefully."

This conversation took place some days later — he brought out his whole story when the trail was nearly cold. It appeared that Kurtz was sitting there at the Old Vienna making a great show of reading *The Lone Rider from Santa Fe.*

Martins introduced himself and sat down. "So you were a friend of Harry's," he said.

"I think his best," but Kurtz added, with the smallest pause in which his brain must have registered the error, "except you, of course."

"Tell me how he died."

"I was with him. We came out together from the door of his flat and Harry saw a friend he knew across the road — an American called Cooler. He waved to Cooler, and started across the road to him, when a jeep came tearing round the corner and bowled him over. It was Harry's fault really — not the driver's."

"Somebody told me he died instantaneously."

"I wish he had. He died before the ambulance could reach us, though."

"He could speak then?"

"Yes. Even in his pain he worried about you."

"What did he say?"

"I can't remember the exact words, Rollo — I may call you Rollo, mayn't I? He always called you that to us. He was anxious that I should look after you when you arrived."

"But why didn't you cable to stop me?"

"We did, but the cable must have missed you."

"There was an inquest?"

"Of course."

"Did you know that the police have a crazy notion that Harry was mixed up in some racket?"

"They get rather absurd ideas sometimes," Kurtz said cautiously.

"I'm going to stay here till I prove them wrong."

"I don't see what you can do."

"I'm going to start working back from his death. You were there, and this man Cooler and the chauffeur. You can give me their addresses."

"I don't know the chauffeur's."

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"I can get it from the coroner's records. And then there's Harry's girl —"

Kurtz said, "It will be painful for her."

"I'm not concerned about her. I'm concerned about Harry."

"Do you know what it is that the police suspect?"

"No. I lost my temper too soon."

"Has it occurred to you," Kurtz said gently, "that you might dig up something — well, discreditable to Harry?"

"I'll risk that."

"It will take a bit of time — and money."

"I've got time and you were going to lend me some money, weren't you?"

"I'm not a rich man," Kurtz said. "I promised Harry to see you were all right and that you got your plane back."

"You needn't worry about the money — or the plane," Martins said. "But I'll make a bet with you — in pounds sterling — five pounds against two hundred schillings — that there's something queer about Harry's death."

It was a shot in the dark, but already he had this firm, instinctive sense that there was something wrong, though he hadn't yet attached the word "murder" to the instinct. Kurtz had a cup of coffee halfway to his lips and Martins watched him. The shot apparently went wide; an unaffected hand held the cup to the mouth and Kurtz drank, a little noisily, in long sips. Then he put down the cup and said, "How do you mean — queer?"

"It was convenient for the police to have a corpse, but wouldn't it have been equally convenient, perhaps, for the real racketeers?" When he had spoken he realized that, after all, Kurtz had not been unaffected by his wild statement. The hands of the guilty don't necessarily tremble. Tension is more often shown in the studied action. Kurtz had finished his coffee as though nothing had been said.

"Well" — he took another sip — "of course, I wish you luck, though I don't believe there's anything to find. Just ask me for any help you want."

"I want Cooler's address."

"Certainly. I'll write it down for you. Here it is. In the American zone."

"And yours?"

"I've already put it — underneath. I'm unlucky enough to be in the Russian zone — so you shouldn't visit me very late. Things sometimes happen round our way." He rose, giving one of his studied Viennese smiles. "Keep in touch," he said, "and if you need help — but I still think you are very unwise."

Martins sat on a hard chair just inside the stage door of the Josefstadt Theater. He had sent up his card to Anna Schmidt after the matinee, marking it, "A friend of Harry's."

He had had time to think. He thought, "Kurtz is right. They are all right. I'm behaving like a romantic fool; I'll just have a word with Anna

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Schmidt, a word of commiseration, and then I'll pack and go."

A voice over his head called, "Mr. Martins," and he looked up at the face that watched him from between the curtains a few feet above his head. It wasn't a beautiful face, he firmly explained to me. Just an honest face with dark hair and eyes which looked brown; a wide forehead, a large mouth which didn't try to charm. She said, "Will you come up, please? The second door on the right."

There are some people, he explained to me carefully, whom one recognizes instantly as friends. You can be at ease with them because you know that never, never will you be in danger. "That was Anna," he said.

He said to her, "I wanted very much to see you. About Harry."

It was the dreaded moment; he could see her mouth stiffen to meet it.

"Yes?"

"I was his friend. We were at school together, you know, and after that there weren't many months running when we didn't meet."

She said, "When I got your card I couldn't say no, but there's nothing, really, for us to talk about. Everything's over, finished."

"We both loved him."

"I don't know. You can't know a thing like that — afterward. I don't know anything any more except — that I want to be dead, too."

Martins told me, "Then I nearly went away. What was the good of tormenting her because of this wild idea of mine? But instead I asked her one question: 'Do you know a man called Cooler?' "

"An American?" she asked. "I think that was the man who brought me some money when Harry died. I didn't want to take it, but he said Harry had been anxious — at the last moment."

"So he didn't die instantaneously?"

"Oh, no."

Martins said to me later, "I began to wonder why I had got that idea into my head, and then I thought, it was only the man in the flat who told me so, no one else."

Martins said to Anna, "He must have been very clear in his head at the end, because he remembered about me, too. That seems to show that there wasn't really any pain."

"That's what I tell myself all the time," she said.

"Did you know the doctor?"

"Yes. Harry sent me to him once."

Martins suddenly saw in that odd chamber of the mind which constructs such pictures, instantaneously, irrationally, a desert place, a body on the ground, a group of birds gathered. He thought, "How odd that they were all there, just at that moment, all Harry's friends — Kurtz, the doctor, this man Cooler; only the two people who loved him seemed to have been missing." He said, "And the driver? Did you hear his evidence?"

"He was upset, scared. But Cooler's evidence exonerated him. No, it wasn't his fault, poor man. I've often heard Harry say what a careful driver he was."

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"*He* knew Harry, too?" Another bird flapped down and joined the others round the silent figure on the sand who lay face down.

Somebody called outside the window, "Fräulein Schmidt."

She said, "They don't like one to stay too long. It uses up their electricity."

He had given up the idea of sparing her anything. He told her, "The police say they were going to arrest Harry. They'd pinned some racket on him."

She took the news in much the same way as Kurtz. "Everybody's in a racket."

"I don't believe he was in anything serious. He may have been framed. Do you know a man called Kurtz?"

"I don't think so."

"He wears a toupee."

"Oh." He could tell that that struck home. He said, "Don't you think it was odd they were all there — at the death. Everybody knew Harry. Even the driver, the doctor —"

She said, with hopeless calm, "I've thought that, too, though I didn't know about Kurtz. I wondered whether they'd murdered him, but what's the use of wondering?"

"I'm going to find out," Rollo Martins said.

"Fräulein Schmidt," the voice called again.

"I must go."

"I'll walk with you a bit of the way."

It was almost dark. The snow had ceased. The great statues of the Ring, the prancing horses, the chariots, and the eagles, were gunshot-gray with the end of evening light. "It's better to give up and forget," Anna said.

"Will you give me the doctor's address?"

They stood in the shelter of a wall while she wrote it down for him.

"And yours, too?"

"Why do you want that?"

"I might have news for you."

"There isn't any news that would do any good now."

He watched her from a distance board her tram, bowing her head against the wind.

An amateur detective has this advantage over the professional, that he doesn't work set hours: Rollo Martins was not confined to the eight-hour day; his investigations didn't have to pause for meals. In his one day he covered as much ground as one of my men would have covered in two, and he had this initial advantage over us, that he was Harry's friend.

Dr. Winkler was at home. Perhaps he would not have been at home to a police officer. Again, Martins had marked his card with the sesame phrase: "A friend of Harry Lime's."

Dr. Winkler was the cleanest doctor Martins had ever seen. He was very small and neat, in a black tail coat and a high, stiff collar; his little black mustache was like an evening tie. He said, "Mr. Martins?"

"We were both friends of Harry Lime," Martins said.

"I was his medical adviser," Dr.

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Winkler corrected him, and waited obstinately.

"I arrived too late for the inquest. Harry had invited me out here to help him in something. I don't quite know what. I didn't hear of his death till I arrived."

"Very sad," Dr. Winkler said.

"Naturally, under the circumstances, I want to hear all I can."

"There is nothing I can tell you that you don't know. He was knocked over by a car. He was dead when I arrived."

"Would he have been conscious at all?"

"I understand he was for a short time, while they carried him into the house."

"You are quite certain that it was an accident?"

Dr. Winkler touched his mustache. "I was not there. My opinion is limited to the cause of death. Have you any reason to be dissatisfied?"

The amateur has another advantage over the professional: He can be reckless. He can tell unnecessary truths and propound wild theories.

Martins said, "The police had implicated Harry in a very serious racket. It seemed to me that he might have been murdered — or had even killed himself."

"I am not competent to pass an opinion," Dr. Winkler said.

"Do you know a man called Cooler?"

"I don't think so."

"He was there when Harry was killed."

"Then of course I have met him. He wears a toupee."

"That was Kurtz."

Dr. Winkler was not only the cleanest, he was also the most cautious doctor that Martins had ever met. His statements were so limited that you could not for a moment doubt their veracity. He said, "There was a second man there."

"Had you been Harry's doctor for long?"

"For about a year."

"Well, it's good of you to have seen me."

Dr. Winkler bowed. When he bowed there was a very slight creak, as though his shirt were made of celluloid.

When Rollo Martins left Dr. Winkler's he was in no danger. He could have gone home to bed at Sacher's and slept with a quiet mind. He could even have visited Cooler at this stage without trouble. No one was seriously disturbed. Unfortunately for him, he chose to go back to Harry's flat. He wanted to talk to the little vexed man who said he had seen the accident.

The little man — who bore the name of Koch — was friendly and quite ready to talk. He had just finished dinner and had crumbs on his mustache. "Ah, I remember you. You are Herr Lime's friend."

He welcomed Martins in with great cordiality and introduced him to a mountainous wife.

"Did you tell me that you had

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actually seen the accident?" Martins asked.

Herr Koch exchanged glances with his wife. "The inquest is over, Ilse. There is no harm. You can trust my judgment. The gentleman is a friend. . . . Yes, I saw the accident, but you are the only one who knows. When I say that I saw it, perhaps I should say that I heard it. I heard the brakes put on and the sound of the skid, and I got to the window in time to see them carry the body to the house."

"But didn't you give evidence?"

"It is better not to be mixed up in such things. My office cannot spare me. We are short of staff, and of course I did not actually *see* —"

"But you told me yesterday how it happened."

"That was how they described it in the papers."

"Was he in great pain?"

"He was dead. I looked right down from my window here and I saw his face. I know when a man is dead. You see, it is, in a way, my business. I am the head clerk at the mortuary."

"But the others say that he did not die at once."

"Perhaps they don't know death as well as I do."

"I think, Herr Koch, that you should have given evidence."

"One must look after oneself, Herr Martins. I was not the only one who should have been there."

"How do you mean?"

"There were three people who helped to carry your friend to the house."

"I know — two men and the driver."

"The driver stayed where he was. He was very much shaken."

"Three men . . ." It was as though, suddenly fingering that bare wall, his fingers had encountered, not so much a crack perhaps, but at least a roughness that had not been smoothed away by the careful builders.

"Can you describe the men?"

But Herr Koch was not trained to observe the living; only the man with the toupee had attracted his eyes; the other two were just men, neither tall nor short, thick nor thin. He had seen them from far above, foreshortened, bent over their burden. They had not looked up, and he had quickly looked away and closed the window, realizing at once the wisdom of not being seen, himself. "There was no evidence I could really give, Herr Martins."

No evidence, Martins thought, no evidence! He no longer doubted that murder had been done. Why else had they lied about the moment of death? And the third man? Who was he?

He said, "Did you see Herr Lime go out?"

"No."

"Did you hear a scream?"

"Only the brakes, Herr Martins."

It occurred to Martins that there was nothing — except the word of Kurtz and Cooler and the driver — to prove that in fact Harry had been killed at that precise moment. There was the medical evidence, but that could not prove more than that he had died, say, within a half-hour, and

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in any case the medical evidence was only as strong as Dr. Winkler's word.

"Herr Martins, it just occurs to me, if you need accommodation and spoke to the authorities quickly, you might secure Herr Lime's flat."

"Could I see the flat?"

"Ilse, the keys."

Herr Koch led the way into the flat that had been Harry's. In the little dark hall there was still the smell of cigarette smoke — the Turkish cigarettes that Harry always smoked.

The living-room was completely bare — it seemed to Martins too bare. The chairs had been pushed up against the walls; the desk at which Harry must have written was free from dust or any papers. Herr Koch opened a door and showed the bedroom — the bed neatly made with clean sheets.

"You see," Herr Koch said, "it is quite ready for a newcomer."

"Were there no papers, Herr Koch?"

"Herr Lime was always a very tidy man. His wastepaper basket was full and his brief case, but his friend fetched that away."

"His friend?"

"The gentleman with the toupee."

It was possible, of course, that Lime had not taken the journey so unexpectedly, and it occurred to Martins that Lime had perhaps hoped he would arrive in time to help. He said to Herr Koch, "I believe my friend was murdered."

"Murdered?" Herr Koch's cordiality was snuffed out by the word. He said, "I would not have asked you in here if I had thought you would talk such nonsense."

"Why should it be nonsense?"

"We do not have murders in this zone."

"All the same, your evidence may be very valuable."

"I have no evidence. I saw nothing. I am not concerned. You must leave here at once, please. You have been very inconsiderate." He hustled Martins back through the hall; already the smell of the cigarette smoke was fading a little more. Herr Koch's last word before he slammed his own door was, "It's no concern of mine."

Poor Herr Koch! We do not choose our concerns. Later, when I was questioning Martins closely, I said to him, "Did you see anybody at all on the stairs, or in the street outside?"

"Nobody." He had everything to gain by remembering some chance passer-by, and I believed him.

"Of course, it proves nothing. There is a basement where anybody who had followed you could hide."

"Yes."

"The whole story may be phony."

"Yes."

"The trouble is I can see no motive for you to have done it. It's true you are already guilty of getting money on false pretenses: You came out here to join Lime, perhaps to help him —"

Martins said to me, "What was this racket you keep on hinting at?"

"I'd have told you all the facts

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when I first saw you if you hadn't lost your temper so damned quickly. Now, I don't think I shall be acting wisely to tell you. It would be disclosing official information, and your contacts, you know, don't inspire confidence. A girl with phony papers supplied by Lime, this man Kurtz —"

"Dr. Winkler —"

"I've got nothing against Dr. Winkler. No, if you are phony, you don't need the information, but it might help you to learn exactly what we know. You see, our facts are not complete."

"I bet they aren't. I could invent a better detective than you in my bath."

"Your literary style does not do your namesake justice." Whenever he was reminded of Mr. Crabbin, that poor, harassed representative of the British Council, Rollo Martins turned pink with annoyance, embarrassment, shame. That, too, inclined me to trust him.

He had certainly given Crabbin some uncomfortable hours. On returning to Sacher's Hotel after his interview with Herr Koch he had found a desperate note waiting for him from the representative.

"I have been trying to locate you all day," Crabbin wrote. "It is essential that we should get together and work out a proper program for you. This morning by telephone I have arranged lectures at Innsbruck and Salzburg for next week, but I must have your consent to the subjects, so that proper programs can be printed.

"Apart from this, there are a great many people here who would like to meet you, and I want to arrange a cocktail party for early next week. But for all this I must have a few words with you." The letter ended on a note of acute anxiety: "You will be at the discussion tomorrow night, won't you? We all expect you at 8:30, and, needless to say, look forward to your coming. I will send transport to the hotel at 8:15 sharp."

Rollo Martins read the letter and, without bothering any further about Mr. Crabbin, went to bed.

Martins spent the greater part of the following day studying the reports of the inquest, thus again demonstrating the superiority of the amateur to the professional, and making him more vulnerable to Cooler's liquor (which the professional in duty-bound would have refused). It was nearly five o'clock when he reached Cooler's flat.

Again the card marked "Harry's friend" was like an entrance ticket.

Cooler, a man with tousled gray hair, a worried, kindly face, and long-sighted eyes, was in officer's uniform, but wore no badges of rank. His maid referred to him as Colonel Cooler. His warm, frank handclasp was the most friendly act that Martins had encountered in Vienna.

"Any friend of Harry is all right with me," Cooler said.

"I wondered — you were there, weren't you? — if you'd tell me about Harry's death."

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"It was a terrible thing," Cooler said. "I was just crossing the road to go to Harry. He and a Mr. Kurtz were on the sidewalk. Maybe if I hadn't started across the road he'd have stayed where he was. But he saw me and stepped straight off to meet me, and this jeep — it was terrible, terrible. The driver braked, but Harry didn't stand a chance. . . . Have a drink, Mr. Martins. It's silly of me, but I get shaken up when I think of it."

"Was the other man in the car?"

Cooler took a long pull and then measured what was left with his tired, kindly eyes. "What man would you be referring to, Mr. Martins?"

"I was told there was another man there."

"I don't know how you got that idea. You'll find all about it in the inquest reports." He poured out two more generous drinks. "There were just the three of us — me and Mr. Kurtz and the driver. The doctor, of course. I expect you were thinking of the doctor."

"This man I was talking to happened to look out of a window — he has the next flat to Harry's — and he said he saw three men and the driver. That's before the doctor arrived."

"He didn't say that in court."

"He didn't want to get involved."

"You'll never teach these Europeans to be good citizens. It was his duty." Cooler brooded sadly over his glass. "It's an odd thing, Mr. Martins, with accidents. You'll never get two reports that coincide. Why, even I and Mr. Kurtz disagreed about the details. The thing happens so suddenly, you aren't concerned to notice things, until bang crash! And then you have to reconstruct, remember. I expect he got too tangled up trying to sort out what happened before and what after, to distinguish the four of us."

"The four?"

"I was counting Harry. What else did he see, Mr. Martins?"

"Nothing of interest — except he says Harry was dead when he was carried to the house."

"Well, he was dying — not much difference there. . . . Have another drink, Mr. Martins?"

"Perhaps one more — to keep you company," Martins said.

"Do you know Anna Schmidt?" he asked, while the whisky still tingled on his tongue.

"Harry's girl? I met her once, that's all. As a matter of fact, I helped Harry fix her papers. Not the sort of thing I should confess to a stranger, I suppose, but you have to break the rules sometimes. Humanity's a duty, too."

"What was wrong?"

"She was Hungarian and her father had been a Nazi, so they said. She was scared the Russians would pick her up."

"But she lives in the British zone."

"That wouldn't stop them. The streets aren't well lighted, and you haven't many police around."

"You took her some money from Harry, didn't you?"

"Yes, but I wouldn't have men-

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tioned that affair. Did she tell you?"

The telephone rang, and Cooler drained his glass.

"Hullo," he said. . . . "Why, yes. This is Colonel Cooler." Then he sat with the receiver at his ear and an expression of sad patience, while some voice a long way off drained into the room. "Yes," he said once. "Yes." His eyes dwelt on Martins's face, but they seemed to be looking a long way beyond him; flat and tired and kind, they might have been gazing out over acres of sea. He said, "You did quite right," in a tone of commendation, and then, with a touch of asperity, "Of course they will be delivered. I gave my word. Good-by."

He put the receiver down and passed a hand across his forehead wearily. It was as though he were trying to remember something he had to do.

Martins said, "Had you heard anything of this racket the police talk about?"

"I'm sorry. What's that?"

"They say Harry was mixed up in some racket."

"Oh, no," Cooler said, "no. That's quite impossible. He had a great sense of duty."

"Kurtz seemed to think it was possible."

"Kurtz doesn't understand how an Anglo-Saxon feels," Cooler replied.

It was nearly dark when Martins made his way along the banks of the canal; across the water lay the half-destroyed Diana Baths and in the distance the great, black circle of the Prater Wheel, stationary above the ruined houses. Coming up the Kärtnerstrasse, Martins passed the door of the Military Police station. The four men of the International Patrol were climbing into their jeep; the Russian M.P. sat beside the driver (for the Russians had that day taken over the chair for the next four weeks), and the Englishman, the Frenchman, and the American mounted behind. The third stiff whisky fumed in Martins's brain, and he moved toward the only girl he knew in Vienna.

He hadn't, of course, known that she would be in, that her play was not on that night in the Josefstadt. She was sitting alone in an unheated room, with the bed disguised as a divan.

He said awkwardly, "I thought I'd just look you up. You see, I was passing —"

"Passing? Where to?" It had been a good half-hour's walk from the Inner City to the rim of the English zone, but he always had a reply: "I had too much whisky with Colonel Cooler. I needed a walk, and I just happened to find myself this way."

"I can't give you a drink here. Except tea."

"No. No thank you." He said, "Can I stay a little?"

"I wish you would."

He slumped down on the divan, and he told me, a long time later, that there it was he took his second real look at her. She stood there as awkward as himself in a pair of old flannel

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trousers, with her legs firmly straddled as though she were opposing someone and was determined to hold her ground.

"One of those bad days?" he asked her.

"It's always bad about this time." She explained, "He used to look in, and when I heard your ring, just for a moment, I thought —" She sat down on a hard chair opposite him and said, "Please talk. You knew him. Just tell me anything."

And so he talked. He noticed after a while that their hands had met. He said to me, "I never meant to fall in love, not with Harry's girl."

"When did it happen?" I asked him.

"It was very cold and I got up to close the window curtains. I only noticed my hand was on hers when I took it away. As I stood up I looked down at her face, and she was looking up. It wasn't a beautiful face — that was the trouble. It was a face to live with, day in, day out. A face for wear. I felt as though I'd come into a new country where I couldn't speak the language. I had always thought it was beauty one loved in a woman.

"I stood there at the curtains, waiting to pull them, looking out. I couldn't see anything but my own face, looking back into the room, looking for her. She said, 'And what did Harry do that time?' and I wanted to say, 'Damn Harry. He's dead. We both loved him, but he's dead. The dead are made to be forgotten.' Instead, of course, all I said was, 'What do you think? He just whistled his old tune as if nothing was the matter,' and I whistled it to her as well as I could. I heard her catch her breath, and I looked round, and before I could think, is this the right way, the right card, the right gambit? I'd already said, 'He's dead. You can't go on remembering him forever.' "

She had answered, "I know, but perhaps something will happen first."

"What do you mean — something happen?" Martins had asked.

"Oh, I mean, perhaps there'll be another war, or I'll die, or the Russians will take me."

"You'll forget him in time. You'll fall in love again."

"I know, but I don't want to. Don't you see I don't want to?"

So Rollo Martins came back from the window and sat down on the divan again. When he had risen, half a minute before, he had been the friend of Harry comforting Harry's girl; now he was a man in love with Anna Schmidt, who had been in love with a man they had both once known called Harry Lime. He didn't speak again that evening about the past. Instead, he began to tell her of the people he had seen.

"I can believe anything of Winkler," he told her, "but Cooler — I liked Cooler. He was the only one of his friends who stood up for Harry. The trouble is, if Cooler's right, then Koch is wrong, and I really thought I had something there."

"Who's Koch?"

He explained how he had returned

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to Harry's flat, and he described his interview with Koch, the story of the third man.

"If it's true," she said, "it's very important."

"It doesn't prove anything. After all, Koch backed out of the inquest; so might this stranger."

"That's not the point," she said. "It means that *they* lied, Kurtz and Cooler."

"They might have lied so as not to inconvenience this fellow — if he was a friend."

"Yet another friend — on the spot. And where's your Cooler's honesty then?"

"What do we do? Koch clamped down like an oyster and turned me out of his flat."

"He won't turn *me* out," she said, "or his Ilse won't."

They walked up the long road to the flat together; the snow clogged on their shoes and made them move slowly. Anna Schmidt said, "Is it far?"

"Not very far now. Do you see that knot of people up the road? It's somewhere about there." The group of people up the road was like a splash of ink on the whiteness that flowed, changed shape, spread out. When they came a little nearer Martins said, "I think that is his block. What do you suppose this is — a political demonstration?"

Anna Schmidt stopped; she said, "Who else have you told about Koch?"

"Only you and Colonel Cooler. Why?"

"I'm frightened. It reminds me —" She had her eyes fixed on the crowd and he never knew what memory out of her confused past had risen to warn her. "Let's go away," she implored him.

"You're crazy. We're onto something here, something big."

"I'll wait for you."

"But you're going to talk to him."

"Find out first what all those people —" She said, strangely for one who worked behind the footlights, "I hate crowds."

He walked slowly on alone. He had the impression of heads turning to watch him come. When he reached the fringe of the little crowd he knew for certain that it was the house. A man looked hard at him and said, "Are you another of them?"

"Who do you mean?"

"The police."

"No. What are they doing?"

"They've been in and out all day."

"What's everybody waiting for?"

"They want to see him brought out."

"Who?"

"Herr Koch."

"What's he done?"

"Nobody knows that yet. They can't make their minds up in there — it might be suicide, you see, and it might be murder."

"Herr Koch?"

"Of course. There is talk of a foreigner who called on Herr Koch yesterday."

Martins walked back down the street toward Anna. He said, "Koch

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has been murdered. Come away from here." He walked as rapidly as the snow would let him, turning this corner and that. He paid no attention when Anna said to him, "Then what Koch said was true. There *was* a third man."

The tram cars flashed like icicles at the end of the street; they were back at the Ring. Martins said, "You had better go home alone. I'll keep away from you a while till things have sorted out."

"But nobody can suspect you."

"They were asking about the foreigner who called on Koch yesterday. There may be some unpleasantness for a while."

"Why don't you go to the police?"

"They are so stupid. I don't trust them. See what they've pinned on Harry. And then I tried to hit this man Callaghan. They'll have it in for me. The least they'll do is send me away from Vienna. But if I stay quiet — There's only one person who can give me away: Cooler."

"And he won't want to."

"Not if he's guilty. But then I can't believe he's guilty."

Before she left him she said, "Be careful. Koch knew so very little and they murdered him. You know as much as Koch."

The warning stayed in his brain all the way to Sacher's; after nine o'clock the streets are very empty, and he would turn his head at every padding step coming up the street behind him, as though that third man whom they had protected so ruthlessly was now following him like an executioner.

At Sacher's a desk man said, "Colonel Calloway has been in, asking after you, sir. I think you'll find him in the bar."

"Back in a moment," Martins said, and walked straight out of the hotel again; he wanted time to think. But immediately he stepped outside a man came forward, touched his cap, and said firmly, "Please, sir." He flung open the door of a khaki-painted truck with a Union Jack on the windscreen and firmly urged Martins within. He surrendered without protest; sooner or later he had felt sure inquiries would be made; he had only pretended optimism to Anna Schmidt.

The driver drove too fast for safety on the frozen road, and Martins protested. All he got in reply was a sullen grunt and a muttered sentence containing the word "orders."

The car drew up before a building and the driver led the way up two flights of stairs. He rang the bell of a great double door, and Martins was aware beyond it of many voices. He turned sharply to the driver and said, "Where the —?" but the driver was halfway down the stairs, and already the door was opening. His eyes were dazzled from the darkness by the lights inside; he heard but he could hardly see the advance of Mr. Crabbin: "Oh, Mr. Dexter, we have been so anxious, but better late than never. Let me introduce you to Miss Wilbraham and the Gräfin von Meyersdorf."

A buffet laden with coffee cups; an

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urn steaming; a woman's face shiny with exertion; two young men with the happy, intelligent faces of sixth formers; and huddled in the background, like faces in a family album, a multitude of the old-fashioned, the dingy, the earnest and cheery features of constant readers. Martins looked behind him, but the door had closed.

He said desperately to Mr. Crabbin, "I'm sorry, but —"

"Don't think any more about it," Mr. Crabbin said. "One cup of coffee and then let's go on to the discussion."

One of the young men placed a cup in his hand, the other shoveled in sugar before he could say he preferred his coffee unsweetened.

Martins was not able to tell me very much about the meeting; his mind was still dazed with the death. He could not say how he got through the discussion. Perhaps Crabbin took the brunt; perhaps he was helped by some of the audience who got into an animated discussion about the film version of a popular American novel. He remembered very little more before Crabbin was making a final speech in his honor. Then one of the young men led him to a table stacked with books and asked him to sign them.

Martins took his pen and wrote: "From B. Dexter, author of *The Lone Rider from Santa Fe*," and the young man read the sentence and blotted it, with a puzzled expression.

Suddenly in a mirror Martins saw my driver, Sgt. Paine. He seemed to be having an argument with one of Crabbin's young henchmen. Martins thought he caught the sound of his own name. It was then he lost his nerve, and with it any relic of common sense. The young man, Crabbin, and Paine stood together at the entrance.

"And this gentleman?" Sgt. Paine asked.

"It's Mr. Benjamin Dexter," the young man said.

Paine said respectfully, "We were looking for you, sir. Colonel Calloway wants a word with you."

I had kept a very careful record of Martins's movements from the moment I knew that he had not caught the plane home. Events had taken a disquieting turn, and it seemed to me that the time had come for another interview.

I put a good, wide desk between us and gave him a cigarette. I found him sullen but ready to talk, within strict limits. I asked him about Kurtz, and he seemed to me to answer satisfactorily. I then asked him about Anna Schmidt, and I gathered from his reply that he must have been with her after visiting Colonel Cooler. That filled in one of the missing points. I tried him with Dr. Winkler, and he answered readily enough.

"You've been getting around," I said, "quite a bit. And have you found out anything about your friend?"

"Oh, yes," he said. "It was under your nose but you didn't see it."

"What?"

"That he was murdered." That

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took me by surprise; I had at one time played with the idea of suicide, but I had ruled even that out.

"Go on," I said. He tried to eliminate from his story all mention of Koch, talking about an informant who had seen the accident. This made his story rather confusing, and I couldn't grasp at first why he attached so much importance to the third man.

"He didn't turn up at the inquest, and the others lied to keep him out."

"I don't see much importance in that. If it was a genuine accident, all the evidence needed was there. Why get the other chap into trouble?"

"There was more to it than that," he said. "The little chap who told me about the third man — they've murdered him. You see, they obviously didn't know what else he had seen."

"Now we have it," I said. "You mean Koch."

"Yes."

"As far as we know you were the last person to see him alive. The Austrian police are anxious to pin this on you. Frau Koch told them how disturbed her husband was by your visit. Who else knew about it?"

"I told Cooler." He said excitedly, "Suppose immediately I left he telephoned the story to someone — to the third man. They had to stop Koch's mouth."

"When you told Colonel Cooler about Koch, the man was already dead. That night he got out of bed, hearing someone, and went downstairs."

"Well, that rules me out. I was in Sacher's."

"But he went to bed very early. Your visit brought on a headache. It was soon after nine that he got up. You returned to Sacher's at nine-thirty. Where were you before that?"

He said gloomily, "Wandering round and trying to sort things out."

I wanted to frighten him, so there was no point in telling him that he had been followed all the time. I knew that he hadn't cut Koch's throat, but I wasn't sure that he was quite so innocent as he made out.

He said, "How did you know that I went to Koch's? That was why you pulled me here, wasn't it?"

"Immediately you left Colonel Cooler's, he telephoned to me."

"Then that lets him out. If he had been concerned, he wouldn't have wanted me to tell you my story — to tell Koch's story, I mean."

"He might assume that you were a sensible man and would come to me with your story as soon as you learned of Koch's death. By the way, how did you learn of it?"

He told me promptly, and I believed him. It was then I began to believe him altogether. He said, "I still can't believe Cooler's concerned. I'd stake anything on his honesty. He's one of those Americans with a real sense of duty."

"Yes," I said, "he told me about that when he phoned. He apologized for it. He said it was the worst of having been brought up to believe in citizenship. He said it made him feel

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a prig. To tell you the truth, Cooler irritates me. Of course, he doesn't know that I know about his tire deals."

"Is he in a racket too, then?"

"Not a very serious one. I daresay he's salted away $25,000."

"I see." He said thoughtfully, "Is that the kind of thing Harry was up to?"

"No. It was not so harmless."

He said, "You know, this business — Koch's death — has shaken me. Perhaps Harry did get mixed up in something pretty bad. Perhaps he was trying to clear out again, and that's why they murdered him."

"Or perhaps," I said, "they wanted a bigger cut of the spoils. Thieves fall out."

He took it this time without any anger at all. He said, "We won't agree about motives, but I think you check your facts pretty well. I'm sorry about the other day."

"That's all right." There are times when one has to make a flash decision — this was one of them. I owed him something in return for the information he had given me. I said, "I'll show you enough of the facts in Lime's case for you to understand. But don't fly off the handle. It's going to be a shock."

It couldn't help being a shock. The war and the peace let loose a great number of rackets, but none more vile than this one. The black marketeers in food did at least supply food, and the same applied to all the other racketeers who provided articles in short supply at extravagant prices. But the penicillin racket was a different affair altogether. Penicillin in Austria was supplied only to the military hospitals; no civilian doctor, not even a civilian hospital, could obtain it by legal means.

As the racket started, it was relatively harmless. Penicillin would be stolen by military orderlies and sold to Austrian doctors for very high sums — a phial would fetch anything up to $300.

This racket went on quite happily for a while. Occasionally an orderly was caught and punished, but the danger simply raised the price of penicillin. Then the racket began to get organized. The big men saw big money in it, and while the original thief got less for his spoils, he received, instead, a certain security.

This, I have sometimes called stage two. Stage three was when the organizers decided that the profits were not large enough. Penicillin would not always be impossible to obtain legitimately; they wanted more money and quicker money while the going was good. They began to dilute the penicillin with colored water, and in the case of penicillin dust, with sand.

I keep a small museum in one drawer in my desk, and I showed Martins examples. He wasn't enjoying the talk, but he hadn't yet grasped the point. He said, "I suppose that makes the stuff useless."

I said, "We wouldn't worry so much if that was all, but just consider

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that you can be immunized from the effects of penicillin. At the best, you can say that the use of this stuff makes a penicillin treatment for the particular patient ineffective in the future. That isn't so funny, of course, if you are suffering from V.D. Then the use of sand on a wound that requires penicillin — well, it's not healthy. Men have lost their legs and arms that way — and their lives. But perhaps what horrified me most was visiting the children's hospital here. They had bought some of this penicillin for use against meningitis. A number of children simply died, and a number went off their heads. You can see them now in the mental ward."

He sat on the other side of the desk scowling into his hands.

I said, "It doesn't bear thinking about very closely, does it?"

"You haven't shown me any evidence yet that Harry —"

"We are coming to that now," I said. "Just sit still and listen." I opened Lime's file and began to read.

I am not going to bother the reader now, as I bothered Martins then, with all the stages — the long tussle to win the confidence of the go-between, a man called Harbin. At last we had the screws on Harbin, and we twisted them until he squealed. "But he led us only as far as Kurtz," I said.

"Kurtz!" Martins exclaimed. "But why haven't you pulled him in?"

"Zero hour is almost here," I said.

Kurtz was a great step forward, for Kurtz was in direct communication with Lime — he had a small outside job in connection with international relief. With Kurtz, Lime sometimes put things on paper, if he was pressed. I showed Martins the photostat of a note. "Can you identify that?"

"It's Harry's hand." He read it through. "I don't see anything wrong."

"No, but now read this note from Harbin to Kurtz, which we dictated. Look at the date. This is the result."

He read them both through twice.

"You see what I mean?"

If one watched a world come to an end, a planet dive from its course, I don't suppose one would chatter, and a world for Martins had certainly come to an end, a world of easy friendship, hero-worship, confidence, which had begun twenty years before.

While he sat there, looking at his hands and saying nothing, I fetched a precious bottle of whisky out of a cupboard and poured out two large doubles. "Go on," I said, "drink that," and he obeyed me as though I were his doctor. I poured him out another.

He said slowly, "Are you certain that he was the real boss?"

"It's as far back as we have got so far."

"Suppose," he said, "someone had got a line on him, forced him into this racket, as you forced Harbin to double-cross."

"It's possible."

"And they murdered him in case he talked when he was arrested."

"It's not impossible."

"I'm glad they did," he said. "I

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wouldn't have liked to hear Harry squeal." He made a curious little dusting movement of his hand on his knee, as much as to say, "That's that." He said, "I'll be getting back to England."

"I'd rather you didn't just yet. The Austrian police would make an issue if you tried to leave Vienna at the moment. You see, Cooler's sense of duty made him call them up, too."

"I see," he said hopelessly.

"When we've found the third man —" I said.

"I'd like to hear *him* squeal," Martins said.

After he left me Martins went straight off to drink himself silly. By the time the spots were swimming in front of his eyes he was oppressed by a sense of loneliness. The trams had stopped, and he set out obstinately on foot to find Harry's girl.

It must have been about three in the morning when he climbed the stairs to Anna's room. He was nearly sober by that time and had only one idea in his head — that she must know about Harry, too. He felt that somehow this knowledge would pay the mortmain that memory levies on human beings, and he would stand a chance with Harry's girl.

When Anna opened the door to him, with astonishment at the sight of him, tousled, on the threshold, he never imagined that she was opening the door to a stranger.

He said, "Anna, I've found out everything."

"Come in," she said. "You don't want to wake the house." She was in a dressing gown; the divan had become a bed.

"Now," she said, while he stood there, fumbling for words, "what is it? I thought you were going to keep away. Are the police after you?"

"No."

"You didn't really kill that man, did you?"

"Of course not."

"You're drunk, aren't you?"

"I am a bit," he said sulkily. The meeting seemed to be going on the wrong lines. "I've been with the British police. They are satisfied I didn't do it. But I've learned everything from them. Harry was in a racket — a bad racket." He said hopelessly, "He was no good at all. We were both wrong."

"You'd better tell me," Anna said.

She sat down on the bed and he told her.

"They really proved it?" Anna asked.

"Yes."

"I'm glad he's dead now," she said. "I wouldn't have wanted him to rot for years in prison."

"But can you understand how Harry — your Harry, my Harry — could have got mixed up —?" He said hopelessly, "I feel as though he had never really existed, that we'd dreamed him. Was he laughing at fools like us all the time?"

"He may have been. What does it matter?" she said. "Sit down. Don't worry." He had pictured himself

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comforting *her*, not this other way about. She said, "If he was alive now, he might be able to explain, but we've got to remember him as he was to us. There are always so many things one doesn't know about a person, even a person one loves — good things, bad things. We have to leave plenty of room for them."

"Those children —"

She said angrily, "For heaven's sake stop making people in *your* image. Harry was real. He wasn't just your hero. He was Harry. He was in a racket. He did bad things. What about it? He was the man we knew."

He said, "Don't talk such bloody wisdom. Don't you see that I love you?"

She looked at him with astonishment. "You?"

"Yes, me. I don't kill people with fake drugs. I'm not a hypocrite who persuades people that I'm the greatest — I'm just a bad writer who drinks too much and falls in love with girls —"

She said, "But I don't even know what color your eyes are. If you'd rung me up just now and asked me whether you were dark or fair or wore a mustache, I wouldn't have known."

"Can't you get him out of your head?"

"No."

He said, "As soon as they've cleared up this Koch murder I'm leaving Vienna. I can't feel interested any longer in whether Kurtz killed Harry — or the third man. Whoever killed him, it was a kind of justice. Maybe I'd kill him myself under those circumstances. But you still love him. You love a cheat, a murderer."

"I loved a man," she said. "I told you — a man doesn't alter because you find out more about him. He's still the same man."

"I hate the way you talk. I've got a splitting headache, and you talk and talk."

Suddenly she laughed. She said, "You are so comic. You come here at three in the morning — a stranger — and say you love me. Then you get angry and pick a quarrel. What do you expect me to do — or say?"

"I haven't seen you laugh before. Do it again. I like it."

"There isn't enough for two laughs," she said.

He took her by the shoulders and shook her gently. He said, "I'd make comic faces all day long. I'd learn a lot of jokes from the books on After-Dinner Speaking."

"Come away from the window. There are no curtains."

"There's nobody to see." But automatically checking his statement, he wasn't quite so sure; a long shadow that had moved, perhaps with the movement of clouds over the moon, was motionless again. He said, "You still love Harry, don't you?"

"Yes."

"Perhaps I do. I don't know." He dropped his hands and said, "I'll be pushing off."

He walked rapidly away. He didn't bother to see whether he was being followed, to check up on the shadow.

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But passing by the end of the street, he happened to turn, and there, just around the corner, pressed against a wall to escape notice, was a thick, stocky figure. Martins stopped and stared. There was something familiar about that figure. "Perhaps," he thought, "I've grown unconsciously used to him during these last twenty-four hours; perhaps he is one of those who have so assiduously checked my movements."

Martins stood there, twenty yards away, staring at the silent, motionless figure in the dark side street who stared back at him. A police spy, perhaps, or an agent of those other men, those men who had corrupted Harry first and then killed him. Even possibly the third man?

It was not the face that was familiar, for he could not make out so much as the angle of the jaw; nor a movement, for the body was so still that he began to believe that the whole thing was an illusion caused by shadow. He called sharply, "Do you want anything?" and there was no reply. He called again: "Answer, can't you?" And an answer came, for a window curtain was drawn petulantly back by some sleeper he had awakened and the light fell straight across the narrow street and lit up the features of Harry Lime.

"Do you believe in ghosts?" Martins asked of me.

"Do *you?*"

He hadn't come to me at once with his story — only the danger to Anna Schmidt tossed him back into my office, like something the sea has washed up, tousled, unshaven, haunted by an experience he couldn't understand.

He said, "If it had been just the face, I wouldn't have worried. I'd been thinking about Harry, and I might easily have mistaken a stranger. . . . The light was turned off again at once, you see; I only got one glimpse, and the man made off down the street — if he was a man. There was no turning for a long way, but I was so startled I gave him another thirty yards' start. He came to one of those newspaper kiosks, and for a moment moved out of sight. I ran after him. It only took me ten seconds to reach the kiosk, and he must have heard me running, but the strange thing was he never appeared again. I reached the kiosk. There wasn't anybody there. The street was empty. He couldn't have reached a doorway without my seeing him. He'd simply vanished."

"What did you do then?"

"I had to have another drink. My nerves were all to pieces."

"Didn't that bring him back?"

"No, but it sent me back to Anna's. . . . But Anna was gone."

I think he would have been ashamed to come to me with his absurd story if it had not been for the attempt on Anna Schmidt. My theory when he did tell me his story was that there had been a watcher, though it was drink and hysteria that had pasted on the man's face the features of Harry Lime. That watcher had noted his

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visit to Anna, and the member of the ring — the penicillin ring — had been warned by telephone.

Events that night moved fast. Kurtz lived in the Russian zone, on a wide, empty, desolate street that runs down to the Prater Platz.

What happened was this: Russia, you remember, was in the chair as far as the Inner Stadt was concerned, and when Russia was in the chair you expected certain irregularities. On this occasion, halfway through the patrol, the Russian policeman pulled a fast one on his colleagues and directed the car to the street where Anna Schmidt lived. The British M.P. that night was new to his job; he didn't realize till his colleagues told him that they had entered a British zone. He spoke a little German and no French, and the Frenchman, a cynical, hard-bitten Paris *flic*, gave up the attempt to explain to him.

The American took on the job. "It's all right by me," he said, "but is it all right by you?" The British M.P. tapped the Russian's shoulder, who turned his Mongol face and launched a flood of incomprehensible Slav at him. The car drove on.

Outside Anna Schmidt's block the American took a hand in the game and demanded in German what it was all about. The Frenchman leaned against the bonnet and lit a stinking cigarette. France wasn't concerned, and nothing that didn't concern France had any genuine importance to him. The Russian dug out a few words of German and flourished some papers. As far as they could tell, a Russian national wanted by the Russian police was living there without proper papers.

They went upstairs and the Russian tried Anna's door. It was flimsily bolted, but he put his shoulder to it without giving the occupant an opportunity of letting them in. Anna was in bed, though I don't suppose, after Martins's visit, that she was asleep.

While Anna was dressing, the British M.P., a Corporal Starling, phoned through to me, and I gave my instructions.

When he went back to Anna's room a dispute was raging. Anna had told the American that she had Austrian papers (which was true) and that they were quite in order (which was rather stretching the truth). The American told the Russian in bad German that they had no right to arrest an Austrian citizen. He asked Anna for her papers, and when she produced them the Russian snatched them from her hand.

"Hungarian," he said, pointing at Anna. "Hungarian," and then, flourishing the papers, "Bad, bad."

The American, whose name was O'Brien, said, "Give the girl back her papers," which the Russian, naturally, didn't understand. The American put his hand on his gun, and Corporal Starling said gently, "Let it go, Pat."

"If those papers are not in order we got a right to look."

"Just let it go. We'll see the papers at H.Q."

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"If we get to H.Q. You can't trust these Russian drivers. As like as not he'll drive straight through to the Russian zone."

They got back into the car with Anna, who sat in the front with the Russian, dumb with terror.

After they had gone a little way the American touched the Russian on his shoulder. "Wrong way. H.Q. that way," he said.

The Russian chattered back in his own tongue, making a conciliatory gesture, while they drove on.

"Just as I figured it," O'Brien told Starling. "They're taking her to the Russian zone." Anna stared out with terror through the windscreen. "Don't worry," O'Brien said, "I'll fix this all right." His hand was fidgeting round his gun again.

The driver put on his brakes suddenly; there was a road block. You see, I knew they would have to pass this military post if they did not make their way to the international H.Q. in the Inner City. I put my head in at the window and said to the Russian, haltingly, in his own tongue, "What are you doing in the British zone?"

He grumbled that it was "Orders."

"Whose orders? Let me see them." I noted the signature — it was useful information. I said, "This tells you to pick up a certain Hungarian national and war criminal who is living with faulty papers in the British zone. Let me see the papers."

He started on a long explanation, but I saw the papers sticking in his pocket and I pulled them out. He made a grab at his gun, and I punched his face — I felt really mean at doing so, but it's the conduct they expect from an angry officer and it brought him to reason — that and seeing three British soldiers approaching his headlights.

I said, "These papers look to me quite in order, but I'll investigate them and send a report of the result to your colonel. He can, of course, ask for the extradition of this lady at any time. All we want is proof of her criminal activities. I'm afraid we don't regard Hungarian in itself as Russian nationality."

He goggled at me (my Russian was probably half incomprehensible), and I said to Anna, "Get out of the car." She couldn't get by the Russian, so I had to pull him out first. Then I put a packet of cigarettes in his hand, said "Have a good smoke," waved my hand to the others, gave a sigh of relief, and that incident was closed.

While Martins told me how he went back to Anna's and found her gone, I did some hard thinking. I wasn't satisfied with the ghost story or the idea that the man with Harry Lime's features had been an illusion. Keeping Martins silent with a glass of whisky, I rang up my assistant and asked him if he had located Harbin yet. He said no; he understood he'd left Klagenfurt a week ago to visit his family in the adjoining zone.

"All right," I said; "go on trying to get hold of him."

"I'm sorry, sir."

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Martins was right; I had made a complete fool of myself, but remember that police work in an occupied city is not like police work at home. Everything is unfamiliar — the methods of one's foreign colleagues; the rules of evidence; even the procedure at inquests. I suppose I had got into the state of mind where one trusts too much to one's personal judgment. I had been immensely relieved by Lime's death. I was satisfied with the accident.

I said to Martins, "Did you look inside the newspaper kiosk, or was it locked?"

"Oh, it wasn't exactly a newspaper kiosk," he said. "It was one of those solid iron kiosks you see everywhere plastered with posters."

"You'd better show me the place."

"But is Anna all right?"

"The police are watching the flat. They won't try anything else yet."

I didn't want to make a fuss and stir in the neighborhood with a police car, so we took trams — several trams, changing here and there, and came into the district on foot.

"This is the turning," Martins said, and led me down a side street. We stopped at the kiosk. "You see, he passed behind here and simply vanished — into the ground."

"That was exactly where he did vanish to," I said.

"How do you mean?"

An ordinary passer-by would never have noticed that the kiosk had a door, and of course it had been dark when the man disappeared. I pulled the door open and showed to Martins the little curling iron staircase that disappeared into the ground.

He said, "Then I didn't imagine him."

"It's one of the entrances to the main sewer."

"And anyone can go down?"

"Anyone. For some reason, the Russians object to these being locked."

"How far can one go?"

"Right across Vienna. People used them in air raids; some of our prisoners hid for two years down there. Deserters have used them —and burglars. If you know your way about you can emerge again almost anywhere in the city through a manhole or a kiosk like this one. The Austrians have to have special police for patrolling these sewers." I closed the door of the kiosk again. I said, "So that's how Harry disappeared."

"You really believe it was Harry?"

"The evidence points that way."

"Then whom did they bury?"

"I don't know yet, but we soon shall, because we are digging him up again. I've got a shrewd idea, though, that Koch wasn't the only inconvenient man they murdered."

Martins said, "What are you going to do about it?"

"I don't know. It's no good applying to the Russians, and you can bet Lime's hiding out now in the Russian zone. We have no line now on Kurtz, for Harbin's gone."

"But it's odd, isn't it, that Koch didn't recognize the dead man's face from the window?"

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"The window was a long way up, and I expect the face had been damaged before they took the body out of the car."

Martins said thoughtfully, "I wish I could speak to him. You see, there's so much I simply can't believe."

"Perhaps you are the only one who could speak to him. It's risky, though, because you do know too much."

"I still can't believe . . . I only saw the face for a moment." He said, "What shall I do?"

"He won't leave the Russian zone now. Perhaps that's why he tried to have the girl taken over. Because he loves her? Because he doesn't feel secure? I don't know. I do know that the only person who could persuade him to come over would be you — or her, if he still believes you are his friend. But first you've got to speak to him. I can't see the line."

"I could go and see Kurtz."

I said, "Remember. Lime may not want you to leave the Russian zone when once you are there, and I can't protect you there."

"I want to clear the whole damned thing up," Martins said, "but I'm not going to act as a decoy. I'll talk to him. That's all."

Martins gave Mr. Kurtz no warning of his visit. Better to find him out than a reception prepared for him. He was careful to carry with him all his papers, including the *laissez-passer* of the four powers that on the face of it allowed him to move freely through all the zones of Vienna.

He had no difficulty in finding Mr. Kurtz's block, and when he rang the bell the door was opened quickly by Mr. Kurtz himself.

"Oh," Mr. Kurtz said. "It's you, Rollo," and made a perplexed motion with his hand to the back of his head.

Martins had been wondering why he looked so different, and now he knew. Mr. Kurtz was not wearing his toupee, and yet his head was not bald. He had a perfectly normal head of hair cut close.

Kurtz said, "It would have been better to have telephoned to me. You nearly missed me; I was going out."

In the hall a cupboard door stood open, and Martins saw Mr. Kurtz's overcoat, his raincoat, a couple of soft hats, and, hanging sedately on a peg like a wrap, Mr. Kurtz's toupee. He said, "I'm glad to see your hair has grown," and was astonished to see, in the mirror on the cupboard door, the hatred flame and blush on Mr. Kurtz's face.

When Martins turned, Mr. Kurtz smiled at him like a conspirator and said vaguely, "It keeps the head warm."

"Whose head?" Martins asked, for it had suddenly occurred to him how useful that toupee might have been on the day of the accident. "Never mind," he went quickly on, for his errand was not with Mr. Kurtz. "I'm here to see Harry."

"Are you mad?"

"I'm in a hurry, so let's assume that I am. Just make a note of my madness. If you should see Harry — or his

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ghost — let him know that I want to talk to him. I'll be waiting in the Prater by the Big Wheel for the next two hours — if you can get in touch with the dead, hurry." He added, "Remember, I was Harry's friend."

Kurtz said nothing, but somewhere, in a room off the hall, somebody cleared his throat. Martins threw open a door; he had half expected to see the dead rise yet again, but it was only Dr. Winkler who rose from a chair in front of the kitchen stove, and bowed very stiffly and correctly, with the same celluloid squeak.

Martins turned to Kurtz: "Tell the doctor about my madness. He might be able to make a diagnosis. And remember the place by the Great Wheel. Or do ghosts only rise by night?" He left the flat.

For an hour he waited, walking up and down to keep warm, inside the enclosure of the Great Wheel. The smashed Prater, with its bones sticking crudely through the snow, was nearly empty. A few courting couples would be packed together in a single car of the Wheel and revolve slowly above the city surrounded by empty cars.

Martins wondered who would come for him. Was there enough friendship left in Harry for him to come alone, or would a squad of police arrive? It was obvious from the raid on Anna Schmidt's flat that he had a certain pull. And then as his watch hand passed the hours, he wondered, "Was it all an invention of my mind? Are they digging up Harry's body now in the Central Cemetery?"

Somewhere behind the cake stall a man was whistling, and Martins knew the tune. He turned and waited. Was it fear or excitement that made his heart beat — or just the memories that tune ushered in, for life had always quickened when Harry came, came just as he came now, as though nothing much had happened, nobody had been lowered into a grave or found with cut throat in a basement, came with his amused, deprecating take-it-or-leave-it manner — and of course one always took it.

"Harry."

"Hullo, Rollo."

Don't picture Harry Lime as a smooth scoundrel. He wasn't that. The picture I have of him on my files is an excellent one: He is caught by a street photographer with his stocky legs apart, big shoulders a little hunched, a belly that has known too much good food too long, and on his face a look of cheerful rascality, a geniality, a recognition that *his* happiness will make the world's day. Now he didn't make the mistake of putting out a hand — which might have been rejected — but instead just patted Martins on the elbow and said, "How are things?"

"We've got to talk, Harry."

"Of course."

He had always known the ropes, and even in the smashed pleasure park he knew them, tipping the woman in charge of the Wheel, so that they might have a car to themselves.

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Very slowly on one side of them the city sank; very slowly on the other the great cross girders of the Wheel rose into sight. As the horizon slid away, the Danube became visible, and the piers of the Kaiser Friedrich Brucke lifted above the houses.

"Well," Harry said, "it's good to see you, Rollo."

"I was at your funeral."

"That was pretty smart of me, wasn't it?"

"Not so smart for your girl. She was there, too — in tears."

"She's a good little thing," Harry said; "I'm very fond of her.'

"I didn't believe the police when they told me about you."

Harry said, "I wouldn't have asked you to come if I'd known what was going to happen, but I didn't think the police were onto me."

"Were you going to cut me in on the spoils?"

"I've never kept you out of anything, old man, yet."

He stood with his back to the door as the car swung upward, and smiled back at Rollo Martins, who could remember him in just such an attitude in a secluded corner of the school quad, saying, "I've learnt the way to get out at night. It's absolutely safe. You are the only one I'm letting in on it."

For the first time Rollo Martins looked back through the years without admiration, as he thought, "He's never grown up." Evil was like Peter Pan — it carried with it the horrifying and horrible gift of eternal youth.

Martins said, "Have you ever visited the children's hospital? Have you seen any of your victims?"

Harry took a look at the toy landscape below and came away from the door. "I never feel quite safe in these things," he said. He felt the back of the door with his hand, as though he were afraid that it might fly open and launch him into space.

"Victims?" he asked. "Don't be melodramatic, Rollo; look down there," he went on, pointing through the window at the people moving like black flies at the base of the Wheel. "Would you really feel any pity if one of those dots stopped moving — forever? If I said you can have twenty thousand pounds for every dot that stops, would you really, old man, tell me to keep my money — without hesitation? Or would you calculate how many dots you could afford to spare? Free of income tax, old man. Free of income tax."

"Couldn't you have stuck to tires?"

"Like Cooler? No, I've always been ambitious."

"You are finished now. The police know everything."

"But they can't catch me, Rollo; you'll see. I'll pop up again. You can't keep a good man down."

The car swung to a standstill at the highest point of the curve, and Harry turned his back and gazed out of the window.

Martins thought, "One good shove and I could break the glass," and he pictured the body falling, falling, through the iron struts, a piece of

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carrion dropping down among the flies.

He said, "You know the police are planning to dig up your body. What will they find?"

"Harbin," Harry replied with simplicity.

"Why did the Russians try to take Anna Schmidt?" Martins asked.

"She had false papers, old man."

"Who told them?"

"The price of living in this zone, Rollo, is service. I have to give them a little information now and then."

"I thought perhaps you were just trying to get her here — because she was your girl? Because you wanted her?"

Harry smiled. "I haven't all that influence."

"What would have happened to her?"

"Nothing very serious. She'd have been sent back to Hungary. There's nothing against her, really. A year in a labor camp, perhaps. She'd be infinitely better off in her own country than being pushed around by the British police."

"She loves you."

"Well, I gave her a good time while it lasted."

"And I love her."

"That's fine, old man. Be kind to her. She's worth it. I'm glad." He gave the impression of having arranged everything to everybody's satisfaction.

"I'd like to knock you through the window."

"But you won't, old man. I'd trust you anywhere, Rollo. Kurtz tried to persuade me not to come, but I know you. Then he tried to persuade me to, well, arrange an accident. He told me it would be quite easy in this car."

"Except that I'm the stronger man."

"But I've got the gun. You don't think a bullet wound would show when you hit *that* ground?"

Again the car began to move, sailing slowly down, until the flies were midgets, were recognizable human beings.

"What fools we are, Rollo, talking like this, as if I'd do that to you — or you to me." He turned his back and leaned his face against the glass. "In these days, old man, nobody thinks in terms of human beings. Governments don't, so why should we? They talk of the people and the proletariat, and I talk of the mugs. It's the same thing."

As the car reached the platform and the face of the doomed-to-be-victims, the tired, pleasure-hoping Sunday faces, peered in at them, he said, "I could cut you in, you know. I have no one left in the Inner City."

"Except Cooler? And Winkler?"

"You really mustn't turn policeman, old man." They passed out of the car and he put his hand again on Martins's elbow. "That was a joke; I know you won't. I've got to leave you here. We'll see each other — some time. If you are in a jam, you can always get me at Kurtz's."

He moved away and, turning, waved the hand he had the tact not to offer; it was like the whole past moving off under a cloud.

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Martins called after him, "Don't trust me, Harry," but there was too great a distance now between them for the words to carry.

"Anna was at the theater," Martins told me, "for the Sunday matinee. I had to see the whole dreary comedy through a second time. About a middle-aged composer and an infatuated girl and an understanding — a terribly understanding — wife. Anna acted very badly; she wasn't much of an actress at the best of times. I saw her afterward in her dressing-room.

"I told her Harry was alive — I thought she'd be glad and that I would hate to see how glad she was, but she sat in front of her make-up mirror and let the tears streak the grease paint, and I wished, after all, that she had been glad. She looked awful and I loved her. Then I told her about my interview with Harry, but she wasn't really paying much attention, because when I'd finished she said, 'I wish he was dead.'"

"He deserves to be," Martins had answered.

"I mean, he would be safe then — from everybody," Anna had said.

I asked Martins, "Did you show her the photographs I gave you — of the children?"

"Yes. I thought, it's got to be kill or cure this time. She's got to get Harry out of her system. I propped the pictures up among the pots of grease. She couldn't avoid seeing them. I said, 'The police can't arrest Harry unless they get him into this zone, and we've got to help do it.'

"She said, 'Thought he was your friend.' I said, 'He *was* my friend.' She said, 'I'll never help you to get Harry. I don't want to see him again, I don't want to hear his voice. I don't want to be touched by him, but I won't do a thing to harm him.'

"I felt bitter — I don't know why, because, after all, I had done nothing for her. I just got up and left her then. Now it's your turn to work on me, Colonel. What do you want me to do?"

"I want to act quickly," I told Martins. "It was Harbin's body in the coffin, so we can pick up Winkler and Cooler right away. Kurtz is out of our reach for the time being, and so is the driver. We'll put in a formal request to the Russians for permission to arrest Kurtz and Lime. It makes our files tidy. If we are going to use you as our decoy, your message must go to Lime straight away — not after you've hung around in this zone for twenty-four hours.

"As I see it, you were brought here for a grilling almost as soon as you got back into the Inner City; you heard then from me about Harbin; you put two and two together, and you go and warn Cooler. We'll let Cooler slip for the sake of the bigger game; we have no evidence he was in on the penicillin racket. He'll escape into the Russian zone to Kurtz, and Lime will know you've played the game. Three hours later you send a message that the police are after you; you are in hiding and must see him."

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"He won't come."

"I'm not so sure. We'll choose our hiding place carefully — when he'll think there's a minimum of risk. It's worth trying. It would appeal to his pride and his sense of humor if he could scoop you out. And it would stop your mouth."

He said, "I told Harry not to trust me, but he didn't hear."

"Do you agree to this plan?"

"Yes," he said, "I agree."

All the first arrangements went well. We delayed arresting Winkler, who had returned from the Russian zone, until after Cooler had been warned.

Martins enjoyed his short interview with Cooler. Cooler greeted him without embarrassment and with considerable patronage: "Why, Mr. Martins, it's good to see you. Sit down. I'm glad everything went off all right between you and Colonel Calloway. A very straight chap, Calloway."

"It didn't," Martins said.

"You don't bear any ill will, I'm sure, about my letting him know about you seeing Koch. The way I figured it was this: If you were innocent you'd clear yourself right away, and if you were guilty, well, the fact that I liked you oughtn't to stand in the way. A citizen has his duties."

"Like giving false evidence at an inquest."

Cooler said, "Oh, that old story. I'm afraid you are riled at me, Mr. Martins. Look at it this way — you as a citizen, owing allegiance to —"

"The police have dug up the body. They'll be after you and Winkler. I want you to warn Harry."

"I don't understand."

"Oh, yes, you do." And it was obvious that he did.

Martins left him abruptly. He wanted no more of that kindly, humanitarian face.

It only remained then to bait the trap. After studying the map of the sewer system I came to the conclusion that a café anywhere near the main entrance of the great sewer, which was placed in what Martins had mistakenly called a newspaper kiosk, would be the most likely spot to tempt Lime. He had only to rise once again through the ground, walk fifty yards, bring Martins back with him, and sink again into the obscurity of the sewers.

He had no idea that his method of evasion was known to us. He probably knew that one patrol of the sewer police ended before midnight, and the next did not start till two; and so, at midnight, Martins sat in the little cold café in sight of the kiosk drinking coffee after coffee. I had given him a revolver; I had men posted as close to the kiosk as I could; and the sewer police were ready, when zero hour struck, to close the manholes and start sweeping the sewers inward from the edge of the city.

There was no heating in the café, and Martins sat warming each hand in turn on a cup of ersatz coffee —

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innumerable cups. There was usually one of my men in the café with him, but I changed them every twenty minutes or so irregularly. More than an hour passed. Martins had long given up hope, and so had I where I waited at the end of a phone several streets away, with a party of the sewer police ready to go down.

My telephone rang. It was Martins. He said, "I'm perishing with cold. It's a quarter past one. Is there any point in going on with this?"

"He can't delay much longer if he's coming. He won't want to run into the two-o'clock patrol. Stick it another quarter of an hour, but keep away from the telephone."

Martins's voice said suddenly, "He's here. He's — " And then the telephone went dead.

I said to my assistant, "Give the signal to guard all manholes," and to my sewer police, "We are going down."

What had happened was this: Martins was still on the telephone, still talking to me, when Harry Lime came into the café. I don't know what he heard, if he heard anything. The mere sight of a man wanted by the police and without friends in Vienna speaking on the telephone would have been enough to warn him. He was out of the café again before Martins had put down the receiver. It was one of those rare moments when none of my men were in the café. One had just left and another was about to come in.

Harry Lime brushed by him and made for the kiosk. Martins came out of the café and saw my man. If he had called out then it would have been easy to shoot, but it was not, I suppose, Lime, the penicillin racketeer, who was escaping down the street; it was Harry. He hesitated just long enough for Lime to put the kiosk between them; then he called out, "That's him," but Lime had already gone to ground.

What a strange world unknown to most of us lies under our feet; we live above a cavernous land of waterfalls and rushing rivers, where tides ebb and flow as in the world above.

The main sewer, half as wide as the Thames, rushes by under a huge arch, fed by tributary streams. These streams have fallen in waterfalls from higher levels and have been purified in their fall, so that only in these side channels is the air foul. The main stream smells sweet and fresh, with a faint tang of ozone, and everywhere in the darkness is the sound of rushing water.

It was just past high tide when Martins and the policeman reached the river. First the curving iron staircase, then a short passage so low they had to stoop, and then the shallow edge of the water lapped at their feet. My man shone his light along the edge of the current and said, "He's gone that way," for just as a deep stream when it shallows at the rim leaves an accumulation of debris, so the sewer left in the quiet water against the wall a scum of orange peel, old cigarette butts, and the like, and

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in this scum Lime had left his trail.

My policeman shone his light ahead with his left hand and carried his gun in his right. He said to Martins, "Keep behind me, sir; he may shoot."

The water came halfway up their legs as they walked. The policeman kept his light pointing down and ahead at the disturbed trail at the sewer's edge. He said, "The silly thing is he doesn't stand a chance. The manholes are all guarded and we've cordoned off the way into the Russian zone. All our chaps have to do now is to sweep inward down the side passage from the manholes."

He took a whistle out of his pocket and blew, and very far away there came the notes of the reply. He said, "They are all down here now. The sewer police, I mean."

He lifted his light for the moment to shine it ahead, and at that moment the shot came. The light flew out of his hand and fell on the stream. He said, "Dod blast it!"

"Are you hurt?" Martins asked.

"Scraped my hand, that's all. A week off work. Here, take this other flashlight, sir, while I tie my hand up. Don't shine it. He's in one of the side passages."

For a long time the sound of the shot went on reverberating; when the last echo died, a whistle blew ahead of them, and Martins's companion blew an answer.

Martins said, "Let me come in front. I don't think he'll shoot at me, and I want to talk to him."

"I had orders to look after you, sir."

"That's all right." Martins edged round, plunging a foot deeper in the stream as he went. When he was in front he called out, "Harry," and the name set up an echo, "Harry, Harry, Harry," which traveled down the stream and woke a whole chorus of whistles in the darkness.

A voice startlingly close made them hug the wall. "Is that you, old man?" it called. "What do you want me to do?"

"Come out. And put your hands above your head."

"I haven't a light, old man. I can't see a thing."

"Be careful, sir," the policeman said.

"Get flat against the wall. He won't shoot at me," Martins said. He called, "Harry, I'm going to shine the light. Play fair and come out. You haven't got a chance."

He flashed the light on, and twenty feet away, at the edge of the light and the water, Harry stepped into view. "Hands above the head, Harry."

Harry raised his hand and fired. The shot ricocheted against the wall a foot from Martins's head, and he heard the policeman cry out. At the same moment a searchlight from fifty yards away lit the whole channel, caught Harry in its beams, Martins, the staring eyes of the policeman slumped at the water's edge with the sewage washing to his waist.

Martins stood above the policeman's body, with Harry Lime half-

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way between us. We couldn't shoot for fear of hitting Martins, and the light of the searchlight dazzled Lime. We moved slowly on, our revolvers trained for a chance, and Lime turned this way and that way, like a rabbit dazzled by headlights. Then suddenly he took a flying jump into the deep central rushing stream. When we turned the searchlight after him he was submerged, and the current of the sewer carried him rapidly on, past the body of the policeman, out of the range of the searchlight into the dark.

Martins stood at the outer edge of the searchlight beam, staring downstream. He had his gun in his hand now, and he was the only one of us who could fire with safety. I thought I saw a movement, and called out to him, "There. There. Shoot."

He lifted his gun and fired. A cry of pain came tearing back; a reproach, an entreaty.

"Well done," I called.

I looked up, and Martins was out of sight in the darkness. I called his name, and it was lost in a confusion of echoes, in the rush and the roar of the underground river. Then I heard a third shot.

Martins told me later: "I walked upstream to find Harry, but I must have missed him in the dark. I was afraid to lift the torch; I didn't want to tempt him to shoot again. He must have been struck by my bullet just at the entrance of a side passage. Then I suppose he crawled up the passage to the foot of the iron stairs. Thirty feet above his head was the manhole, but he wouldn't have had the strength to lift it, and even if he had succeeded, the police were waiting above.

"He must have known all that, but he was in great pain, and just as an animal creeps into the dark to die, so I suppose a man makes for the light. He wants to die at home, and the darkness is never home to *us*. He began to pull himself up the stairs, but then the pain took him and he couldn't go on. What made him whistle that absurd scrap of a tune I'd been fool enough to believe he had written himself?

"Anyway, I heard his whistle and came back along the edge of the stream, and felt the wall end and found my way up the passage where he lay. I said, 'Harry,' and the whistling stopped, just above my head. I put my hand on an iron handrail and climbed. I was still afraid he might shoot. Then, only three steps up, my foot stamped down on his hand.

"I shone my light on him; he didn't have a gun; he must have dropped it when my bullet hit him. For a moment I thought he was dead, but then he whimpered with pain. I said, 'Harry,' and he swiveled his eyes with a great effort to my face. He was trying to speak, and I bent down to listen.

"'Bloody fool,' he said — that was all: I don't know whether he meant that for himself or for me. Then he began to whimper again. I couldn't bear it any more, and I put a bullet through him."

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"We'll forget that bit," I said.

Martins said, "I never shall."

A thaw set in that night, and all over Vienna the snow melted, and the ugly ruins came to light again: steel rods hanging like stalactites and rusty girders thrusting like bones through the gray slush. Burials were much simpler than they had been a week before, when electric drills had been needed to break the frozen ground. It was almost as warm as a spring day when Harry Lime had his second funeral. I was glad to get him under earth again. But it had taken two men's deaths. The group by the grave was smaller now; Kurtz wasn't there, nor Winkler — only the girl and Rollo Martins and myself. And there weren't any tears.

After it was over, the girl walked away, without a word to either of us, down the long avenue of trees that led to the main entrance and the tram stop, splashing through the melted snow.

I said to Martins, "I've got transport. Can I give you a lift?"

"No," he said, "I'll take a tram back."

"You win; you've proved me a bloody fool."

"I haven't won," he said. "I've lost."

I watched him striding off after the girl. He caught up with her and they walked side by side. I don't think he said a word to her. It was like the end of a story, except that before they turned out of my sight her hand was through his arm — which is how a story usually begins.

And Crabbin? Oh, Crabbin is still arguing with the British Council about Dexter's expenses. They say they can't pass simultaneous payments in Stockholm and Vienna. Poor Crabbin. . . . Poor all of us, when you come to think of it.

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